Invitation to Islam: A Survival Guide



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point

This work is geared towards a Muslim audience. The author's intention is to make Muslim contacts with those of other faiths more productive. Includes spirituality, theological differences between Christianity and Islam, practices compared, .(secularism, and da'wa (call to faith

Introduction

There is nothing entertaining about this book. It is not a book to sit down with and enjoy, but to be used. It can be handled by individuals, pairs, or small groups, but to do so will require hard work and concentration. It will demand commitment. The material .is somewhat easier to follow in a seminar context

This is a series of studies providing material designed to make Muslim contacts with non-Muslim people more productive. Its purpose is to help Muslims avoid being influenced by subtle attacks on Islamic behaviour. It also points out pitfalls in religious discussions. Finally, it provides material for attaining a goal-oriented, effective means .of actively doing da'wa, or inviting people to Islam

These studies are not for the one who wallows in love and tolerance, maintaining that all religious traditions are equally valid and that all ways lead to God. It may well be that all ways lead to God, but then all will stand before Him to be rewarded or punished according to what they have done with the revelation of truth given to them.

The philosophy behind this book is that there is a faith that

is right and true, and all other faiths are deviations to a greater or lesser degree. Furthermore, all people have the obligation to find and follow that faith. Finally, all people have the obligation, once having found faith, to propagate it in appropriate .ways

Three sources make up the basis of these contemplations. The first is the theoretical framework of academic Comparative Religion, and Missiology. The second is the context of missions targeting Muslim populations. The third is the Qur'anic advice on .how to meet the people of the Book

The most important question of the reader will be how to use this material. First of all, this book presents a theory and philosophy. This means that the careless reader, looking for quick and brief advice, may be disappointed. In the long run, this will save time and energy. It is also more effective to gain a deeper understanding of what one wants to do, than merely to pick up a few tips without actually changing one's .approach

This study is based on the philosophy that the Bible can be used effectively in dealing with the people of the Book, for the very good reason that the Bible more consistently teaches Islam than it does Christianity. Working with Jews is another matter, since Judaism, both in teaching and practice, is very close to Islam. It is of little use to point out to Jews that the Bible does not support the doctrine of the Trinity, for example. They do not believe in it

anyway. Although there is a focus on Christian-Muslim relations, much of the material in this study can be applied especially to secularized people, who unconsciously maintain many Christian misconceptions, and even to people of other religious .traditions

The chapters of this study will describe the true faith to some extent, and point out ways in which other traditions have deviated from the right path. Finally, they will give several models of ways of propagating the faith, ways that are based on experience and research, on a realization of the contemporary challenges met by Muslims, especially as targets of Christian evangelization, and on some Qur'anic passages giving guidance in how to deal with the people of the Book. This study presents the theory and practice, but not all of the essentials. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the Qur'an, other Islamic literature, and insofar as people of the Book are .concerned, the Bible and Islamic studies of the Bible

This material is designed to be used by individuals, partners in doing da'wa (invitation to Islam), and small, informal groups established with the purpose of inviting people to Islam. The expertise can be best acquired through participation in seminars focusing on the material in a systematic way, and dealing with the questions of the participants as they come up. The greater focus is on what an ordinary person can do with very limited means. This is not to neglect the importance of the grand message or mass movements. Rather, it hopefully

prepares the ground for things more effective. Great movements start with a few .people with dedication and who grasp the opportunities

A number of methods of da'wa are dealt with and evaluated. Some of them are simple, and require little preparation. Among these is distributing literature in various ways. Some, though important and needing great preparation, are barely mentioned, because they require great resources. Among these are medical, social, and educational work. So the main emphasis here is on what one or several dedicated individuals can do. This does not mean that the matters presented here are not of interest to those doing a more extended work. The matters discussed are actually .vital for all Muslims

The first chapter points out that different beliefs require different approaches, so that the style of presentation must change according to the content of the information. Examples are drawn from the three primary beliefs in which Christians and Muslims differ: the oneness of God, the prophethood of Muhammad, and the Imamate. Each .doctrine because of its content requires its own kind of presentation

It cannot be overemphasized that work should be done systematically. A written file should be maintained for each individual for whom da'wa is being made. The second chapter notes various spiritual types and ways of approach, changing the focus from differences in the content of information to differences in the kinds of people who receive it. A written evaluation of each individual's spiritual typology should be made. This means that one must find opportunities

to ask the individual what his beliefs and practices are. A second sheet should be taken to evaluate the ways of approach and plan specifically in what situations they can be implemented.

The third chapter argues for setting goals of spiritual change. This should also be evaluated for each individual, based on the spiritual profile that has already been made. It is no use to spend time convincing people of what they already believe. On the other hand, unless a systematic plan is made, important goals will be forgotten.

The fourth chapter points out the differences between Islamic and Christian beliefs, while the fifth chapter points out the differences in practice. These chapters are valuable for refining the spiritual profile and the goals already made in chapters two and three. Chapter six provides similar material from the point of view of the secular challenges of the modern world as well as from non-Christian traditions.

Chapter seven gives a survey of the missionizing practices of Christians. It evaluates them, showing why most of them are inappropriate in Islam. However, some tips on da'wa can be gleaned from them. But for the most part, they are useful to know in order to avoid them. Chapter seven also proposes an Islamically based model for doing da'wa. It is not meant to be followed literally, but as a point of departure for developing a working and effective program that takes little time and money. It can be adapted to the needs of individuals, partners or couples,

.or small, informal groups

Chapter eight is a study of the passages in the holy Qur'an that contain the expression "people of the Book" and give guidance on how to relate to them. This guidance is in sum an excellent rule of da'wa outlined in sixteen points. Anyone attempting da'wa should memorize this sixteen-point da'wa plan and keep it constantly in mind while .dealing with the people of the Book

Chapter nine is an appendix, giving general guidance to the use of the Bible and at the same time forming a bridge to the following parts, where the Biblical support for Islamic belief and practice is overwhelmingly copious. It points out some of the pitfalls .in using the Bible

These missiological essays were written not only to inspire commitment to inviting people to the right path, but to make people realize how important doing so actually .is. It is a matter of survival

Thomas McElwain

A Christmas Gift from Muslim to Christian

While at an invitation dinner I met a man who invited me to come to a certain Islamic center to give a lecture on what Muslims have to offer Christians. The event took place just before the Christian holidays, and he hoped that I might make an effort to find common ground. As I thought about the abundance of the Christmas season, I began to smile. I thought that I did well to separate myself from a practice that I could not rightly afford! At the same time I remembered a text in the holy Qur'an that used

at the beginning and end these two key words, abundance and bounties. I thought that if anything in the Qur’an referred to Christmas, it must be Qur’an Chapter ١٠٢, .called Takathur

Abundance diverts you, until you come to the graves. Nay! you shall soon know. Nay!“ Nay! You shall soon know. Nay! If you had known with a certain knowledge, You should most certainly have seen hell; then you shall most certainly see it with the eye of certainty; then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the ”.bounties

Considering that even Christians realize that Jesus, peace on him, was not born on the ٢٥th of December, why should Muslims show any regard for the day? The answer is that they should not. They may, however, have regard for their neighbors who observe the day. In times when many Christians consider terrorism to be the fundamental feature of Islam, Christmas provides an opportunity for Muslims to demonstrate to their Christian neighbours that Islam, in its very essence, is a faith of peace and good will, and that this is not limited to any particular day. That is a value .shared by Muslim and Christian alike

At the same time, Muslims are justifiably famous for their hospitality. No matter how poor, a Muslim will do all in his power to entertain his guest with the best that he is able to acquire. The invited guest does not leave the Muslim household without tasting both food and drink. Furthermore, a Muslim is

offended if anything is offered in return, as though by his hospitality he had laid an obligation on his guest. Considering the zest with which a Muslim provides hospitality, ?what more can he give the Christian as a Christmas gift

The text from Suratut Takathur states that in the Day of Judgement we shall be held accountable for the bounties, the na'im. What are the bounties, these greatest of .divine gifts, for which we are accountable

It is reported that the eighth Holy Imam Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha (as) has said that "a man does not like burdening anyone with any obligation about what is gifted to him. How could God ask for anything He has Himself granted out of His grace? But what God will ask man to account for is about the belief in Him and the belief in the truthfulness of the Holy Prophet and the Ahlul-Bait." The Holy Qur'an trans. With notes by S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, Tahrike Tarsile, Elmhurst, New York, page ۱۹۰۰. In a longer narrative the sixth Holy Imam Ja'fer as-Sadiq (as) poses a series of questions to Abu Hanifa in which he makes the same point. We are not brought to account for matters of food and drink, but on the matter of the unity of God or at-Tawhid, an-.Nubuwwat, and the Imamate

We are fortunate in having the Imamic commentary on this otherwise obscure passage of the Holy Qur'an. I fear that many of us might fall into the same trap as

Abu Hanifa in his discussion with the holy Imam, and consider that the divine blessings about which we shall be held to account on the day of Judgement are the blessings of food and drink, health, wealth and well-being. The Imams teach us, however, that the bounties, the na'im of this text, are the knowledge of the one true God, His prophets, and divine guidance. What better gift can a Muslim give to a Christian than the bounties God Himself has chosen to bestow on humankind, the gifts of greatest value, ?the bounties for which we are to be held in account

In offering these bounties, the most important of divine gifts, to our Christian neighbours, we are offering better things that food and drink, finer things than hospitality. Furthermore, we are offering not only divine gifts, far better than any we could provide ourselves, but we are only offering the Christians something of their own. Both Christian and Muslim might be surprised by such a statement. But the fact is that these three bounties are the subjects most extensively and most deeply dealt .with in Christian Scripture. Indeed, many Christians may not realize this amazing fact

Some years ago I was interim pastor in a church in Erie, Pennsylvania. At a prayer meeting I was scandalized to hear a woman pray for a brand new pink Cadillac. Upon further reflection, I began to realize that perhaps her petition was more sincere than my prayers for spiritual blessings. I cannot doubt that

she was praying from the heart, and that if she had received a new pink Cadillac, she would have been overjoyed. My sincerity and joy in learning to love my enemy according to my Christian duty, for example, might very well be questioned. One .should be overjoyed with the bounties that Allah has given

The bounties were once the possession of Christians, who lost them many centuries ago. What joy it must be, then, to be given these bounties as a free gift, and find that .one's most valuable possessions, long lost, had been returned

So there are several reasons why these are the gifts that Muslims should give to Christians. The first reason is that the bounties belonged to the Christians centuries ago and were lost. Muslims are responsible for returning lost property. The second reason is that we are accountable for the three bounties on the Day of Judgement, and not for food and drink. Muslims who are so hospitable with food and drink, for which they are not accountable on the Day of Judgement, should have a care about those more important things for which they will be held accountable. Thirdly, the .bounties are better gifts than a pink Cadillac

The first of the bounties is the proclamation of Tawhid or the unicity of God. It is the central theme of the holy Qur'an in such passages as Suratu Aali-'Imran ٣:٢ "God! There is no God but He, the Ever Living, the Self-Subsistent." In the very next ayat it mentions

that the one true God also sent the Torah and the Gospel, that is, the Christian Scriptures. Despite the fact that Christians had largely lost this first of all bounties before the coming of the holy Qur'an, this bounty is still to be found in their Scriptures.

Exodus ۲۰:۱-۳: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Deuteronomy ۴:۳۵. "Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him.

Deuteronomy ۳۲:۳۹*. "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me."

Nehemiah ۹:۶. "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee."

Psalm ۸۶:۱۰. "For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone."

Isaiah ۴۴:۶,۸*. "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his re deemer the Lord of Hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.... Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I

".know not any

Isaiah ۴۵:۵,۲۱,۲۲*. "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:... Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of ".the earth: for I am God, and there is none else

".Corinthians ۸:۶. "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things ۱

The second of the bounties is the prophetship. Qur'an An-Nisa ۴:۱۷۰. "O people! Indeed the Apostle (Muhammad) has come to you with truth from your Lord; Believe! It is good for you; and if you disbelieve, then to God is whatever is in the heavens and the ".earth; and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise

Prophethood in general is recognized by Christians. Even Jesus (as) is called a prophet in Luke ۲۴:۱۹ "And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all "the people

Hosea ۱۲:۱۰*. "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and ".used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets

Amos ۳:۷. "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his

".secret unto his servants the prophets

Acts ۳:۲۱-۲۳. "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that ".prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people

James ۵:۱۰. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the ".Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience

But the prophetship of Muhammad (as) is also clearly announced in many earlier Scriptures. These can be a basis for giving the bounty to Christians and Jews as well. The best-known of these is Deuteronomy ۱۸:۱۸ "I will raise up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak ".unto them all that I shall command him

Psalm ۱۰۶:۲۴ "Indeed they despise the land of Muhammad (Hebrew Hamda), they do ".not believe his word

Haggai ۲:۷,۹.۷ "And I will shake all nations, and the desired one (Muhammad, Hebrew Hamda) of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of ,hosts. ۹ The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former

saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace (Islam), saith the LORD of hosts."

Song of Solomon ۵:۱۶ "His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely (Hebrew: Mahamadim). This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

The other texts, a dozen or so, are a bit more difficult to present, as they require detailed explanation. The same is true of the reference to the Paraclete in the Gospel of John.

John ۱۶:۷-۱۴. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (Paraclete, a Greek misreading of the Syriac source, which will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

The

third bounty is the Imamate. It is also clearly announced in the Christian Scriptures. "Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" Acts ۸:۳۰,۳۱. In this text a man is reading the book of the prophet, and Philip asks him if he understands what he is reading. He says “How is it possible to understand, unless some man should guide me?” In this he shows how clearly every human being in actual fact understands the necessity of the Imamate in his or her own experience. It is a need conditioned by the essential psychological character of .the human being. It is only denied for reasons of ulterior motives

The name Ali is likewise mentioned in the Bible. Exodus ۸:(۵)۹. “And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory Ali: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the ”?river only

”.Numbers ۲۱:۱۷ “Then Israel sang this song, Ali is a well (of water); sing ye unto it

Numbers ۲۴:۶. “Ali is like the valleys that spread forth, like gardens, a river: as the trees ”.of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters

Let us note the process whereby Muslims generally present the Imamate. There are two sources, the Qur’an and ahadith. These are presented logically, appealing

to reason as the basic argument. Yet generally speaking these arguments do not prevail. It is easy to say that Allah guides whom He will. However, that does not relieve one of the responsibility of presenting one's case in the best possible manner.

At-tawhid (the oneness of God) and an-nubuwwa (prophethood) can be easily proven both from the Qur'an and the former Scriptures merely by presenting the texts. A reasoned approach appears sufficient with these matters without in-depth reference to the context. The matter of the Imamate is different. It is poorly presented in a proof-text manner. It is necessary to dig into the context of the verses. This is not because the Imamate is less clearly evident in Scripture, but because of the character of the Imamate itself. It is revelation in flesh and blood, rather than words. This characteristic makes it less susceptible to verbal evidencing. Context is required.

The process of presenting Imamate leads to a reevaluation of presentation altogether. Observance of our Christian neighbours will soon show us that a great deal depends on the wrapping. A gift is not really a Christmas gift unless it is wrapped properly. The Imamate often comes to the unbeliever without wrapping. Interestingly enough, the Imamate is experienced by the believer wrapping and all. Those who believe in the Imams experience that belief in terms of strong emotional experience. The believer more often focuses on his attachment and love for the Imams than he does on the rational arguments for accepting

their authority. This leads one to wonder if a more emotional approach, adding the .wrapping as it were, might be more effective

Recent research on conversion indicates the important role of attachment. Attachment theory suggests that religious conversion takes place most readily in the individual who has not formed the proper childhood attachments at an early age, or has been traumatized by later events. Such individuals have a psychological need to reestablish normal human attachments. This realization has governed modern Christian approaches to evangelism. There is an effort to seek out individuals who are vulnerable or susceptible to the reestablishment of attachment, and take advantage of this by creating such attachments between the target individual and one or more religious authorities. The individual is thus drawn into the society of the church and .kept there through the psychological, emotional attachment

Observation of conversions to Islam suggests that a similar process often takes place. An individual with attachment problems may embrace Islam through having formed emotional attachments. The attachment may be toward an authority figure within Islam or within an amorous relationship. When the relationship to the Islamic community is based on such attachment, and the individual has expectations of the Islamic community that are determined by the church, difficulties often develop. When emotional expectations and dependencies are not met, the individual may become disillusioned and even detach him or herself from Islam. Therefore, even from a practical point of view, without contemplating the ethical and jurisprudential aspects of the matter, such attachment

.is questionable

Let us return to the Imamate and consider its potential in terms of attachment. There are two types of attachment within the Christian experience that form a basis of contemplation. The first is the type of attachment that arises from the psychological damage just noted. The second is the type of dependency attachment that Christians have in relation to the church establishment and its authorities. Both of these are fruitful areas whereby the bounties may be gift-wrapped for Christians. If these two predispositions can be focused on the Imamate, they form a stable foundation that is able to persist even in the face of disappointment and disillusionment. It must at the same time be pointed out that even clearly secular persons often have one or both of these psychological conditions. The Muslim gift must find a way to transfer these .feelings to the Imamate

Furthermore, Christians are attached to Jesus (as) and sometimes Mary (ra) and other figures in ways that are reminiscent of Muslim attachment to the twelve Holy Imams and to Fatima (as). This emotional attachment is perfectly appropriate within the Islamic context. Islam does not seek to destroy the emotional experience of Christianity, but to broaden it. In this area Shi'ites in their relationship to people of .Christian origin have an advantage

At this point we have seen that there is a contrasting continuum between at-tawhid and al-imamah. At-tawhid is highly susceptible to textual proofing, logical analysis, and rational argument. On the other hand, al-imamah is highly susceptible

to emotional attachment. The two should be wrapped in opposite ways. I believe there is evidence that Christians are not able to open the bounty of tawhid, because the presentation, which begins in textual examination and logic, fails to go on to the emotional response that the realization of at-tawhid creates in the human soul.

In quite the opposite way, the Christian is unable to open the bounty of al-imamah, because the emotional attachment, loyalty, and love of the believer for the Imams is not presented first. The one giving the gift too quickly passes over into the area of proof and logic. Thus, in presenting at-tawheed, we should begin with Scriptural and logical arguments and proceed to love and attachment. By contrast, with al-imamah, we should begin with loyalty, love and attachment to the Imams, and proceed from there to Scriptural and logical arguments.

These conclusions are reached through a process of anthropological observation and open interviews on one hand, and a deductive analysis on the other. It remains for the reader to evaluate the concepts and try them in practice. I hope that these cogitations might provide gifts of bounties that Muslims may present to their Christian neighbours not only on Christmas but throughout the year.

Identifying Types of Spirituality and Types of Approach

"Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: Whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy handhold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things." The Qur'an, Al Baqara ۲:۲۵۶.

In

the world today most of us come into regular contact with individuals who represent cultures, religions and life-styles different from our own. We are thus faced with challenges and opportunities that were rare in earlier times. Each time two people come into contact with each other, something happens. Neither individual remains .exactly as he or she was before. People have an influence on each other

If we ignore this fact of life and it continues to be operative, eventually we shall all conform to a common pattern. What that pattern will eventually be is determined by many factors, one of which is missionary endeavor, that is, activity which has as its goal to influence the religious life of other people so that it becomes more like one's own. Seen from this perspective, the attempt to persuade others of the validity of our own religion is a vital survival mechanism. We do not have to be so altruistic that we are interested in "saving the souls of others." The soul we save is first of all and .primarily our own

This realization must be an encouraging one. It implies that mission activity is successful even when we fail to persuade others to join us in our own beliefs and practices. Nevertheless, successful activity can be attained and measured in terms of goals. A goal-oriented approach to human contacts may seem mercenary, but it is a fact of life with which we must deal. We are surrounded by pressures to conform to often hidden

.agendas. That is why it is of value to think about one's own agenda

Before setting up goals, it is necessary to understand the situation. In the matter of religion, we need to know what kinds of forces confront us. Any model of spiritual types reduces reality to a caricature at best. Such models are more like maps than landscapes, but as such they may also serve as maps in a landscape where we might otherwise be lost. The model of spiritual types in Table One combines a series of degrees of social acceptance with a series of degrees of religiosity. These are not the only terms that might be used, but they provide twelve slots which can be used as a lense for both self-evaluation and the evaluation of those which whom we come into contact. The degrees of acceptance are based on those of Alan Race, Christian and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, ۱۹۸۳. His three-part classification is a useful tool without necessarily .accepting his rather liberal view of religion as such

It is useful to evaluate both oneself and the individual with whom one is in contact in order to establish what the spiritual values of each person actually are. It is also useful to re-evaluate periodically to see to what extent the situation has changed. One's spiritual profile may be made up of several slots, although some of them must be seen as mutually exclusive. If we evaluate an entire

religious tradition in the same way, it may be possible to make some remarks in all twelve categories, because religious traditions are made up of various types of spiritualities beyond those that are generally considered typical of it. The reality of life is also that one individual may fit quite well into one configuration at one period of his or her life, and into another at a later period. The goal of missionary endeavor is to .facilitate that happening

Another possibility is that one individual may shift his or her spiritual profile slightly or even greatly, depending on the situation. This is commonly known as hypocrisy, but it is often used by missionaries as a vehicle. St. Paul himself noted that he is all things to all men. Although this approach is very common among Christian desiring to convert Muslims, it is highly questionable whether it is licit. This is a further reason for trying to define matters accurately. Otherwise, it is someone else who will determine the .course of events

Table One: Types of Spirituality

Exclusive

Inclusive

Pluralistic

Mystical

.Considers that only one faith is valid, and that it consists in direct religious experience

Considers that the direct experience of faith is the only valid one, and that it occurs in .all traditions in basically the same way

Considers that there are many distinct ways of experiencing the divine directly, all of .which are valid for those who engage in them

Belief

Oriented

Considers that only one faith is valid, and that its most important expression is in what .people believe

Considers

p: ٢٢

that there is a fundamental truth at the core of all religions, and this common truth .makes all religions equally valid and in fact one faith

Considers that sincerity of belief is what is important, and that all beliefs as such are .equally valid

Action

Oriented

Considers that only one faith is valid, and that its most important expression is in what .people do

Considers that the ethical element in all faiths is essentially the same, and it is this .element with makes all faiths in reality one

Accepts diversity of belief and organization, because what really matters is .cooperation on social, ethical and spiritual essentials

Secular

Considers the religious identity important, without participating in religious life; or .strongly rejects sectarian identity

Considers that all religions are the same, and serve the same functions for people .who are dependent on them

Maintains that all religions are expressions of human experience, and all are equally .valid or invalid

In Table Two I have defined six basic methods of approach as combining the features of directness and indirectness with a unifying approach, a confrontational one, and an illicit one. Most goal-oriented situations will be characterized by one or more of these approaches. Illicit approaches must be recognized for what they are. The desire to persuade, especially when frustrated, often leads to one of these un-Islamic approaches. Neuro-linguistic programming has become common in not only selling,

but in therapy, teaching and religion. It is not compatible with Islam, because it leads to a change in behavior which bypasses the conscious decision of the individual

.based on reason. From an Islamic point of view, that is immoral

Table Two: Methods of Approach

Direct

Indirect

Unifying

.Focus on common aspects of the different faiths

.Find common interests with a neutral faith content

Confrontational

Confront differences actively, trying to persuade to change belief system and .behavior

Find ways to introduce circumstances which may cause reflection and self-motivated .change

Illicit

.Direct force

.Manipulation, hypnotism, neuro-linguistic programming

The establishment of a spiritual profile is a dynamic process involving the individual in several types of influencing circumstances. Religious authorities, social and religious peers, and individual characteristics integrate in an individual's experience to produce and reinforce a religious identity, a belief system, and a pattern of behavior. This is the template upon which all of the methods of approach noted in Table Two must .come to bear

Now let us approach some of these issues from a practical standpoint by way of illustration. I shall begin with a personal profile. Looking at the twelve slots, I find

myself best described by the intersection of mysticism with exclusivity. My major form of spirituality is within the Islamic mystical tradition. However, I consider that the direct experience of the divine is necessarily dependent on an exclusive belief system, so I would add a secondary slot to my profile, the exclusive belief-oriented, defined as twelver Shi'ite Islam. In addition, I find that practice is essential, so I would add the exclusive action-oriented slot as well. A personal evaluation reveals that I do practice the duties of Islam more or less successfully. I have no particular interest in the

.matter of religious identity, and am willing to be called anything the observer likes

Now let us suppose that there is a person who would like to persuade me to become more like himself. Let us say that the profile of this person is exactly like mine in belief and practice, but differs in rejecting mysticism and focusing on the importance of religious identity. What will be his goal? He will try to dissuade me from an interest in mystical matters, gnosis or cirfan as it may be called. Secondly, he will try to convince me of the importance of maintaining a high profile in terms of religious identity. He will have no goals in relation to my belief system or in relation to my actions, since I have the same beliefs as he and since I perform my prayers in exactly the same way that .he does

Let us suppose there is another person whose spiritual type fits into the same slots, but who defines their content differently. Let us suppose he emphasizes that he is a Christian and considers this identity essential. He may also typically emphasize belief-oriented exclusivism. His goal will be somewhat more complicated. He will try to get me to forget about Islamic mysticism. He will try to get me to identity myself strongly as a Christian. He will try to get me to change my beliefs from typically Shi'ite ones to those which he himself holds: let us say, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the

doctrine of the Atonement (that is, that God exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that I must look to the vicarious, sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross in order to be forgiven for my sins and be saved). He may not emphasize actions very much at all, except that he will try to get me to stop praying in the Islamic way, stop fasting during Ramadhan, etc. He will try to get me to pray by kneeling and folding my hands and speaking to God or Jesus using the formula typical of his communion. He may try to get me to engage in some kind of Bible study program. He may try to get me to be baptized and attend church services. He will have a big job in front of him. It might be easier for him to invent a theology which permits my salvation without conversion, and then he will himself move into one of the areas of either inclusivity or .pluralism

One of the great challenges to Islam is the fact that Western society has gradually shed the requirements of reason and accepted absurdity in their place. This is the process of centuries. The early Church Father Tertullian is famous for having said that he believed in Christian doctrine because it was absurd. Reason is an essential characteristic of Islam and is becoming increasingly difficult to impose as a common parameter. In using direct confrontation, it is necessary to establish the law of

non-contradiction as a bare minimum. Otherwise discussion is futile. Yet this is probably the biggest goal and the hardest to achieve. If Muslims could infuse the critical use of reason into Western society, they would have no other tasks to .accomplish. Society would islamicize itself

We have tried to establish the following points. First, that people can be roughly classed according to degrees of religiosity and degrees of acceptance. Second, that evaluating oneself and the other person according to such a classification is useful in determining goals for interaction and the process of achieving them. Thirdly, that ways of achieving goals through interaction can be classified as indirect and direct, and as confrontational and unifying. Which of these types of approaches must be used will depend on the type of person and situation. Fourthly, illicit approaches are .noted, those involving some form of coercion

Setting Goals for Spiritual Change and Achieving Them

point

Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and" warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace guided the Believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. .For Allah guides whom He will to a path that is straight." The Qur'an, Al Baqara ۲:۲۱۳

Once we have established the spiritual profile, we are ready to set a goal and form a .strategy for attaining it

Each person will have to decide for him or herself what the proper goal is. It is perhaps not enough to decide that the goal is Islam. Islam ought to be clearly defined. I shall offer one such brief description here, but it is possible to take another from someone with better qualifications for defining Islam. I define Islam as follows: Islam is that body of belief and practice which logically follows the act of reason which takes place upon hearing the proclamation that there is no god but God. There are several .implications of this definition

First of all, it emphasizes that Islam is fundamentally a reasoned response, rather than an emotional one. Secondly, it presumes that all of Islam can be reasonably deduced from one basic proclamation: There is no god but God. Thirdly, seeing the matter from the negative view, any other approach than a logical and reasonable one is by definition not Islamic, and any source of belief or practice other than the proclamation that there is no god but God is also by definition not Islamic. In sum, the final answer for any question of why this or that belief or practice should be believed or practiced is the unicity of God. Any other reason for believing or practicing such .things is non-Islamic

These premises will exclude a good many missionary practices found among Christians and Muslims. This matter should be understood clearly, because such practices have been widely used without thinking about their foundations. Let

us take two examples, a Christian one and a so-called Muslim one. A feature of Christian missionary work is to invite people to meetings where nearly all of the activities appeal to the emotions. There is emotional, indeed, sensual music to begin with. This creates a frame of mind open to accepting matters for their emotional appeal rather than their cognitive content. Then there are sermons which appeal to emotions. In older, traditional approaches there is an emotional appeal to guilt, a feeling of having sinned. In modern approaches there is always an appeal to love, .often with the additional note that God loves us even though we do not deserve it

Finally, there is the emotional appeal that Jesus suffered a cruel death on the cross for me and you personally, because he loved us so much. This act is supposed to make everything right, and to accept this is faith. There is rarely a reasoned explanation of why such a death is supposed to be necessary or how such a death can set things right, but even when there is such an explanation, the reasons put forth are nearly always allegorical rather than logical. Muslims who become Christians are .always caught by emotions

The second example is that of a modern Muslim approach. It is to make use of science in a special way. In brief, passages from the Bible are taken to show that the Bible is inconsistent with scientific fact, while other passages from the Qur’an are

taken to show that the Qur’an expresses scientific truths that were unknown at the time of its writing. The conclusion to be drawn is that the Qur’an is superior to the Bible, and therefore Islam is superior to Christianity and shows evidence of divine origin. It must therefore be accepted. What is good about this approach is that it uses .reason. What is bad about it is that the reasoning is false

First of all, Christians do the same thing to show that the Bible is true and the Qur’an is false. Secondly, the fact that scientific truths are expressed in the Qur’an, even though they were unknown at the time of writing, only implies supernatural intervention. The evangelical Christian will take this as evidence that the Qur’an was inspired by Satan (istaghfiru Allah). Thirdly, the appeal assumes that scientific truth is a criterion for judging the validity of the Qur’an. This is the area of false reasoning. First of all, scientific truth is not absolute, but is constantly under review. What is true today is shown tomorrow to be false. The result of this type of Qur’anic interpretation .will inevitably be the need to revise

This whole process has been taken over from a Western point of view, and is the very reason why Christianity got into trouble with science in the first place. By accepting the Copernican theory of the universe to be reflected in the Bible, the Church was forced to deny scientific evidence for a later

revision. This caused a conflict between religion and science which has not been completely healed to the present day. Islam has generally been associated with an enlightened, scientific approach, and thus has not naturally fallen into this trap. But well-meaning people who wish to appear to young people who have been trained in universities teaching Western-developed science have engaged in this dangerous .exercise

The result may be a temporary attraction to Islam, but the results in the long run can only do to Islam what was done to the detriment of Christianity in the Middle Ages. Scientific evidence is not a criterion for judging the validity of the Qur'an. There can be no firm basis for Islamic faith but the one already given: there is no god but God. Any .other basis, even a seemingly thoroughly scientific one, is false to Islam

It is my opinion that the basic goal must be to establish tawheed, the unicity of God, on the basis of reason. Notice that the proclamation does not state that God exists. It states that there is no other god but God. The existence of God is an unending philosophical problem. The shahadat by-passes this difficulty. It presents a binary equation, a negative and a positive, a working hypothesis. Rather than asking whether God exists, we begin by stating All and Nothingness. The logical implication is what we can call reality as an exclusive unicity. This is philosophically much easier to .maintain than the existence of God

The next step

in logic is to note that an exclusive, unified reality cannot be defined in parts. First of all, parts imply limitations or borders. But the reality of our working hypothesis is limited only by Nothingness. Secondly, parts imply internal limitations, which again is .inconsistent with a unicity. There are no parts

The next implication of this exclusive unicity is sovereignty. Considering that no parts can be defined, this sovereignty must be impartial rather than partial. Therefore, it is perfectly just, rather than arbitrary. Notice how an emotional response to the concept of sovereignty will lead us to conclude arbitrariness as evidence of sovereignty itself. As we relate emotionally to the events around us, we will be drawn to classify them as pleasurable or painful, and from this draw the inference that some events are good and others bad. Beginning with the idea that God is sovereign, we will conclude that since He is sovereign over both good and bad, He is therefore arbitrary. We shall see this as a crowning evidence of sovereignty, and being blinded by our emotions, fail to realize that the argument is inconsistent with the fact that there are no parts and .there is therefore no impartiality

Having established that unicity inevitably implies justice, we are faced with the question of whether or not human beings can know justice. It would be not only illogical but an insanity to claim that human capacity can attain justice. No matter how much knowledge we have as humans, we can

never come to the point that we are absolutely certain that we possess all knowledge relevant to a particular matter. A reasoned evaluation of human experience can come to only one conclusion: human beings are incapable of coming to a knowledge of what .is right and wrong

We are capable of coming to the conclusion of reality as a unicity and the implication of impartiality or justice, but we do not have the capacity, if only because of the possible limitations on knowledge, of determining what is right and what is wrong. Why then do we propose to know what is right and wrong, even though it is clear that this is a human impossibility? There are many reasons, all arising from our psychological, social, and physical conditions. We experience the need to know what .is right and wrong and at the same time the incapacity of doing so

There are various ways of reacting to this situation. Having despaired of a coherent understanding of reality, some come to the conclusion that there is no right nor wrong. The best possible society in that case is the society in which the greatest number of people can experience the greatest amount of pleasure at the least possible expense of pain to others. The individual process involves the egotistical approach to get all pleasure for oneself at the expense of all others, that is, to become .a despot over the rest of oppressed humanity

As many individuals strive toward that goal, they compress

into a conformist, honey-comb society, forming an elite. To the extent necessary to preserve their position, they will alleviate the pain of those who are excluded from the elite. This is basically what we see around us. All of the liberal views of human rights, sharing of resources, and environmental concerns are fundamentally the products of this viewpoint, that there is no coherent reality and consequently no right nor wrong. It goes without saying that economic, political and social competitiveness are the .result of the same outlook

Taken from a logical perspective, the implication of justice in reality must come to the conclusion that human beings may, despite their inherent incapacity to determine right and wrong, still come to know right from wrong. The process of coming to know right from wrong in this view is what we call revelation. It is logically deduced in principle from justice and consequently from unicity. We find the process of revelation in two categories, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The first is revelation through verbally expressible means, which we call prophecy. The second is application of that verbal revelation by extra-verbal means in particular situations, which we call divine guidance. The final step of logic is that knowing through revelation what is right and wrong, human beings are accountable for what they do, .whether right or wrong. We call this the day of judgment

We noted in the last lecture that "the establishment of a spiritual profile is a dynamic process involving the

individual in several types of influencing circumstances. Religious authorities, social and religious peers, and individual characteristics integrate in an individual's experience to produce and reinforce a religious identity, a belief system, and a pattern of behavior." This is also true of the changing or re-establishment of a .spiritual profile

Despite the logical sequence that we have just established, the true factors which come into play are other ones. They are not necessarily logical, and yet they generally play the most important roles in the lives of all of us. The particular challenge in both one's own life and in relationship to others is how to relate the rational necessity of Islam with the sociological and psychological realities with which we live. How can we ?escape the unnoticed determinants and function in terms of that rational necessity

This question is a practical one as much as a philosophical one. This is where rational thought and practical existence intersect. The answer implicit in this study at this point in that one should make a conscious decision to believe and practice only what can be seen to derive from tawheed, or the unicity of God. This answer lies as the end of a .philosophical treatment of the matter and at the head of a practical one

The facile response is that Islamic practice reinforces the experiential awareness of tawheed. As such it in practice and reality does replace the determining influences about us, both the positive ones and the negative ones. It reinforces right-mindedness

by going over the positive influences, such as the verdicts of a mujtaheed or Islamic scholar, the opinions of Muslim peers, the pressures of Muslim family members, and the weight of a personal psychology already formed to conform to Islamic life. It counteracts negative influences, such as the contact with people of other faiths or .non-faiths who express non-Islamic ideas and behave in non-Islamic ways

This being true, it is possible to suggest that Islamic acts are in themselves rich tools for propagation. Contact with a non-Muslim may give the opportunity of introducing him or her into specifically Islamic acts. While forming a close relationship with such a person, it is possible to invite such a one to share in an Islamic meal (at which time the concept of halal can be introduced, the avoidance of alcoholic beverages, etc.), to share in the experience of fasting during Ramadhan, and eventually to share in the experience of prayer in prostration. Christian propagation often works through friendship, and this can be turned in favor of Islam. Christians are advised to penetrate Muslim societies in order to bring their faith to Muslims, but in so doing, .they become susceptible to Islamic spirituality

The same method can be turned on secularized people as well, or on those of other religious traditions. The primary vehicle of propagation at this point is the Islamic act itself rather than discussion and argumentation. In many cases the first difficulty to be overcome is fear of Islam, and the proximity of

an Islamic act can raise the heart-rate and the galvanic skin response of a non-Muslim. Exposure to Islamic acts in contexts of no violence is the best form of da'wa or invitation to Islam. This can be enhanced by participating in neutral activities in such a way that with growing familiarity the fear of Islam will decline and the .influence of the Islamic actions will grow

If at all possible, it is better to get people to read literature than to engage in arguments. The problem is that most Islamic literature, for various reasons, does not appeal to a Western audience. Part of the reason for this is that Islam generally appeals to reason, whereas Westerners relate best to advertizement, especially advertizement which leaves them unaware of the fact that they are making decisions. But part of the reason is also failure to evaluate the spiritual type of one's audience .and take this into account in writing

Perhaps one of the best ways of reaching some people is through a challenge to read a translation of the Qur'an from beginning to end. It is my experience that those who oppose the Qur'an have never actually read it. They have only searched through portions of it, looking for specific things. An actual reading of the Qur'an from beginning to end is an impressive experience. This is not limited to the cultivated and educated. There are uneducated people who have embraced Islam after reading .even poor and biased translations of the Qur'an

In the

way of literature, the Bible is a largely untapped source. Without denying the allegations of scholars that the Bible is corrupted in a number of ways, it can still be used effectively in support of Islam. It supports Islam far better than it supports any of the various forms of Christianity, and Christians are forced to use it in support of their own faith. Muslims are in a far better position. The Bible is effective with people of all kinds. Nearly everyone believes that the Bible supports Christianity. Those who have left the practice of Christianity are often stimulated to a reawakened interest in the Bible when they realize that the Bible actually supports Islam instead. According to the Qur'an, one of the major uses of the Bible is in witness to the validity of the Qur'an. A Muslim must only take care not to give the impression that Islamic law is based on the Bible text, since no school of Islamic jurisprudence uses the Bible in that .way

Many people are more susceptible to brief articles than to books. It is therefore necessary to provide answers to their questions with these, despite the fact that .many of them are deficient

The more rational Islamic approach often causes difficulty in discussing issues with others. The normal situation is that a Muslim will bring forward a matter armed with a reason. The response will be an irrational denial or a sentence that turns on a completely different issue. The best way of

dealing with this is to repeat the rational argument, and then leave the matter. One can always let the other have the last word. For some time the Christian will feel that he or she is getting the best of the argument in that way, and this will result in a situation in which he or she might be drawn into accepting rational thinking. For the most part Christians rely on repetition of a statement rather that rational argument. Constant repetition of a false statement wears down the hearer to the point that eventually he will accept it, even without supporting rational arguments. This is the major Christian means of communication. The same weapon can be turned on the Christian, and in a Muslim's mouth may be even more effective, since it has reason to .reinforce it

In dealing with non-Muslims, Christian or otherwise, one has to be aware of their use of illicit devices. Attempts at mental manipulation are almost universal. Christian music often contains subliminal messages which by-pass the conscious mental processes and influence decision-making. This is in addition to the highly charged emotionalism and even sensualism in their music. In recent years Christians have begun dealing in neuro-linguistic programming, which is a form of hypnosis by which people attempt to control others. This can be identified generally by the practice of imitating gestures of the person they are trying to control, by their repetition of phrases taken from the person's speech, and by their introduction into the conversation

.of irrational, unrelated topics and stories without a point

It is good to begin a contact by showing an interest in the beliefs of the person in question. People are generally more interested in answering questions about their own beliefs than they are in hearing about yours. Of course it is not always possible to ask such questions, and many people, especially those largely disconnected from the traditional religions, consider their spiritual life to be a private matter. That possibility must always be taken into consideration. But showing at least an openness to such matters is often a good way to start, and it is actually necessary in order to make an .evaluation of that person's spiritual type

Most people in Europe have a Christian background, with the exception of certain parts of some large cities, where other traditions are better represented. But among all of these, only a small percentage practice traditional religions. All of them, however, are interested in some form of spirituality, although they may not call it by that name. Once that interest is identified, it provides a point of contact at which the .Islamic message can penetrate

At this point, we can make a summary of goals and means of achieving them. The goal is to change the spirituality of an individual toward Islam, which is defined as a system of belief and practice derived from a rational understanding of tawheed, or the unicity of God. The means of doing so is first of all to use

reason in the form of literature and discussion to over-ride the negative social and religious influences to which the person may be susceptible. The second means of doing so is to make Islamic acts prominent and to get non-Muslims to be as closely as possible associated with them to the point first of losing their fear, and then through .familiarity to find in them the source of an awareness of the unicity of God

These two approaches correspond in type to the two forms of revelation, prophecy (or verbal revelation) and divine guidance (active application). What we are actually suggesting here as a form of da'wa or invitation to Islam is that the Muslim take on in a small sense the role of prophet and divine guide toward those to whom da'wa is being extended. The purpose of da'wa is to get the message of revelation across. God Himself chose for that prophecy and divine guidance. We can do no better than to .apply the same principles

Task Checklist of Goals

The following checklist should be filled out for each person. On the left side there is a list of basic Islamic beliefs and practices. There is room for additional ones at the bottom. Each practice should be evaluated for the beginning level of acceptance (۱=rejects completely; ۲=doubts; ۳=does not consider important; ۴=considers valid for some people; ۵=believes but does not practice; ۶=believes and practices). Work should be done for each point separately, giving the date when you began to present the matter and the

date when each point was accepted. In the column of notes on progress, reevaluation .can be made periodically using the scale of ۱-۶, to document change

- Belief

or

- Practice

Beginning level

of acceptance

Date presented

Notes

on

progress

Date

accepted

Oneness of God

Jesus (as) not Deity

Son of God means simply Messiah

Jesus (as) did not die for the sins of the world

Spirit of God not a person of the Deity

Justice of God

Prophets

(Muhammad (as

Divine books

Qur’an

Angels

Imamate in general

(The ١٢ Imams (as

The resurrection

Day of Judgement

Reward and punishment

Prayer in prostration

Fasting

Alms in charity

Khums

Struggle in the way of God

Fostering good

Preventing evil

Love of the righteous

Avoidance of wicked people

Ablutions

Halal food

Avoiding alcoholic drinks

Circumcision

Taking the Shahadatayn

Muslim Identity

Theological Differences Between Christianity and Islam

point

The first need in presenting Islam to people of a Christian background is to understand what beliefs Christians have. The purpose of this essay is to present the beliefs of the major sects of Christianity in terms of what they are and how they differ from Islamic beliefs. An analysis of Christian and Islamic sources will form the basis of .the study

On the face of it, few notice how much Christianity and Islam are alike in basic beliefs. On the five pillars of Islamic belief: the belief in God, angels, the prophets, the sacred books, and the Day of Judgement, there is no basic disagreement. Christians also believe in all of these, although they would define the one God in three persons and take one prophet and one sacred book fewer than in Islam. But all agree on the principles. Unfortunately, the reality is

not that simple. That extra book and prophet are most essential to Islam, to say nothing of the absolute unity of God, whereas the five pillars, to the Christian, miss .some of the basic issues

One of the fundamental differences between Islam and Christianity is that while Islam has a basic set of beliefs in common to nearly all who claim to be Muslims, there is hardly anything that is common to all of Christianity. There are important exceptions to all major Christian beliefs, and although most Christians are members of the top ten, there are about twenty thousand Christian sects, some of which are more visible in propagation than their number of adherents would suggest. That is why it is necessary from the beginning to find out what the individual in question .believes. One cannot make assumptions

In the following study Christian belief is presented as a logical, historical development that diversified in the face of precise historical challenges. This is the context that explains the great diversity in Christian belief, and provides a coherent way of .perceiving it as a whole

Although Christianity should be seen historically as the product of a certain trend among syncretic religious movements in the Roman Empire during the first three centuries of the common era, the history of its beliefs can be studied as beginning with Biblical roots. Almost all Christian groups still claim some kind of adherence to the Bible. Furthermore, most groups also provide creeds, statements of faith made at particular times ostensibly

to proclaim absolute truth, but in fact to defend faith from contemporary attacks upon it. The variations in the creeds thus reflect the history of the crises in Christian belief, .as well as the differences between sects

The purpose of this study is not to provide a comprehensive, objective view of the development of Christian belief. Rather, it is to provide a factual but selective view of Christian doctrine as it can be related to Islamic belief, for the purpose of helping Muslims to situate and understand Christian beliefs as a whole, as they relate to .Islamic beliefs, with minimal effort

The Torah (Tawrat) Sources .۱

The first text in many Christian catechisms, or manuals for teaching Christian doctrine, is the Decalogue from Exodus ۲۰:۱-۱۷. This is the text upon which all of the Christian Creeds have been founded, each modifying the original for the specific purpose of defending the Christian faith in times of doctrinal disagreement. A majority of Christian catechisms suggest a development of religion through three documents: the Decalogue, some portion of Matthew six or the Sermon on the Mount, and the .creed

The text of the Decalogue can be divided into two sections. In fact, the Decalogue is described in the Exodus story as having been written on two stone tablets. There are slight differences in the way the Decalogue is divided into two by the various sects, but nearly all agree that the first part refers to how we should relate to God, and the second part refers to how we should relate

.to other people

.The first part of the Decalogue in the Authorised Version is as follows

.Thou shalt have no other gods before me ۳

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is ۴ in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the :earth

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God ۵ am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third ;and fourth generation of them that hate me

And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my ۶ .commandments

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold ۷ .him guiltless that taketh his name in vain

The text is couched in negatives, but the first article is clearly the establishment of the unicity of God. There is only one God. There is no god but God. This is followed by logical corollaries, that is, that no images of God may be made and worshiped, and that the name of God must be held in special esteem. Finally, the implication is drawn .that since there is only one God, He is sovereign and must be loved and obeyed

The basic structure of positing God first and then several logical corollaries afterward continues to be the format for nearly all Christian creeds and statements

of faith. A comparison of some of these with the Decalogue will reveal not only the spread of Christian belief, but how it has developed from this beginning.

The rest of the Decalogue is a logical development from the sovereignty of God as it implies a certain kind of behaviour towards other people. The second part of the Decalogue is as follows in the Authorised Version.

۸ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

۹ Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

۱۰ But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

۱۱ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

۱۲ Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

۱۳ Thou shalt not kill.

۱۴ Thou shalt not commit adultery.

۱۵ Thou shalt not steal.

۱۶ Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

۱۷ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

The first article, that on

the Sabbath, establishes the authority of God based on creatorship and limits human authority over subordinates, showing that children, workers, and even animals have non-negotiable rights that must not be infringed upon. The second positive command is to honour parents. Then there are the final prohibitions of killing, adultery, stealing, .giving false testimony, and coveting

About half of the Decalogue deals with the unity of God and human responsibility towards God. The other half deals with duties relating to other people in consideration of the sovereignty of God as Creator of all things. The Christian Scriptures consistently maintain the Decalogue as normative. It is the only extensive text in the Bible which is .portrayed as being revealed directly by God, without the means of a prophet

We shall see in the sections to follow how Christian belief has departed from the principles of the Decalogue and come into conflict with it. Islam does not conflict with it, but has focused on new issues that have arisen over time. The former is disastrous, while the latter is merely dangerous. The three popular traditions can be caricaturised as follows. Jews have circumvented the obligations of the Decalogue by focusing on the importance of belonging to the chosen people. Christians have circumvented the obligations of the Decalogue by claiming that belief in the death of Jesus (as) as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin makes everything all right. In practice, Muslims often think that doing ones prayers faithfully or going on pilgrimage atones for anything and

everything they have done, so why not live an unjust life, and at the end of it go to Mecca and set it all right? All three traditions start out with the obligation of obedience and an ethical imperative. All three provide a way to escape doing what God says, but .of the three, Islam at least is salvageable

The Christian Creeds as an Expression of Christian Belief .۲

point

Two things will become apparent as we examine the Christian Creeds. Firstly, they follow the structure of the Decalogue, beginning with the doctrine of God and following with its logical consequences. Secondly, the Christian Creeds, unlike Islamic confessions of faith, conflict with the Decalogue, and thus put Christianity in the position of having to explain why it has departed from a basic revelation which it .ostensibly accepts

It is popular among Christians to consider that there are three early creeds which are accepted by many Christian establishments. These appear in modern times in a number of versions, and an academic study of them would have to depend on the most ancient manuscripts in the original language. Any of the popular versions of today, however, will serve our purpose, and the three below are the versions as .published by Anglican sources

The Apostles' Creed ۲.۱

The briefest creed is called The Apostles' Creed. I have divided it into the two basic parts corresponding to the division of the Decalogue, the first dealing with the belief in .God, and the second with the logical additions to that

.I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth .۱

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit,

۲. the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed contrasts with the Decalogue in being a proclamation of what "I believe," Latin credo, from which comes the English word creed. The Decalogue is a divine declaration rather than a human one, the I who is speaking claims to be God Himself rather than a human being. This is the first great departure from true faith, the rejection of what God says and its replacement with what I believe. The results in Christianity are far-reaching and will be constantly met in any given contact.

The second contrast is the way in which the figure of God is dealt with. Instead of an absolute unicity, there is the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. These are not overtly defined as one God in three persons, but the implication is there. The emphasis is rather on the narrative of Jesus from a cosmic point of view.

The importance of not

worshiping images and the centrality of the name of God in life and worship are neglected in the Apostles' Creed, and this neglect is generally reflected in the major .historical manifestations of Christianity

In the second section, there is a complete ignoring of the Decalogue principles, which are replaced with new values. The Decalogue makes the family, parents with limited authority under God, the basic unit of society. In The Apostles' Creed, the authority of the Church is the primary doctrine, the point of departure, here called catholic or universal. In the light of that, the communion of the saints, that is, the members of the Church, takes the place of the Sabbath proclamation of non-negotiable rights for man and beast and the command to honour parents. That is, basic human rights and the centrality of the family as the basic unit of society are replaced by Church authority and community. This explains the weakness of the family in Christian societies, as compared to Jewish and Islamic ones. The commandments in the rest of the Decalogue are accepted by Christianity, but in the creed they become the sins which God forgives through the mediation of Church authority. Furthermore, those who submit to the Church have the promise of the resurrection of the body and everlasting .life

The resurrection of the body and everlasting life are clear additions to the Decalogue. These are not made by the early Christian Church, however. They are the result of a post-exilic conflict in Judaism, where the

sect of Pharisees adhered to the belief in angels, judgment, and resurrection, while the sect of Saduccees did not. The Pharisaical interpretation has been transmitted to .Christianity, and further, to Islam

Although the history of Christendom is more complex, and the Apostles' Creed does not actually reflect with accuracy Christianity in its first centuries, the Apostles' Creed can be used as a simple point of departure. The other Creeds expand upon its various features and especially in the later ones even disagree with it, little by little producing .the various distinct sectarian doctrines

The Nicene Creed ۲.۲

۱. We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in

the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the .Prophets

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism .٢ for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the .world to come. Amen

The Nicene Creed is probably the first truly historical document, that is, there was probably a real Creed produced at the Council of Nicea, and it is not a later fiction as is The Apostles' Creed. However, the Nicene Creed as presented above is a Western, Protestant view of it with a number of additions, including the replacement of "I" with "we." The original manuscripts have not survived, and there is good reason to think that the doctrine of the Trinity had not yet taken so clear a form by the time of the Council of Nicea in the fourth century. Nevertheless, this version gives us some .notable expansions over The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is inadequate to impose the Trinity, the belief in one God eternally existing in three distinct persons. Therefore, the Nicene Creed goes to some length to define the three persons of the Trinity. Jesus is declared outright to be God. In this version the Holy Ghost is said to proceed from the Father and the Son, a point which was never accepted in the Orthodox Church. The

Latin filioque, and from the Son, remains a major point of doctrinal contention between Western Christianity (Rome and Protestantism) and Orthodoxy. This argument had not yet arisen at the time of Nicea, and its inclusion here is an obvious .anachronism

The addition of one baptism reflects a very complex history of the Christian institution. The early historical practice of a purity system with ablutions is only partially the origin of Christian baptism, which has antecedents in the oriental mysteries which were so popular in the Roman Empire in the first centuries of the common era. The expression "one baptism" effectively represses the remnants of ablutions and the concept of purity in Christianity. Baptism takes on a heavy load of meaning as an initiatory rite of .entrance into the Church, the role it had in the mystery cults

The catholic or universal Church, which was adequate in the Apostles' Creed, needs bolstering here. Now the claim is put forward that the Church is Apostolic, that is, it has the seal of approval of the direct disciples of Christ. The concept of an authoritative Church was not easy to get across, and was not actually even fully established when Constantine made it the religion of the empire. The original concept of the ekklesia or "church" was a calling out of institutions, as the etymology of the .Greek word implies, and not a calling into an authoritative establishment

The Athanasian Creed ۲.۳

۱. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic .Faith

Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. .And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself

to be both God and Lord, So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion, to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor .begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten

The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another; But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved is must think thus of the Trinity. Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he .also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ

For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood; Who, although he be God and Man, yet

he is not two, but one Christ; One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the Manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he will come

to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their .۲ bodies and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

The first point that appears in contrast with the Nicene Creed is the emphasis on the eternity of the Son, which was overlooked in the briefer Creed. Any loophole in the theological definition of God produced its followers in the early centuries of Christianity. The attempt to define God theologically inexorably led to such a situation.

At this point it is clear that the Creed is the result of heated controversy. It was not easy to impose the doctrine of the Trinity on early Christians. The Arian controversy was long and bloody. Yet this version of the Athanasian Creed is

a corrupted Western, Protestant view. It contains the Roman filioque which is again an interpolation never accepted by Orthodoxy. But besides that, it contains a hint of the separate natures of Christ, the unmixed human and divine natures, which is also the result of a later controversy, which divided the Eastern Orthodox Churches (Syrian, Coptic, et al.) from Greek and Roman Christianity. The Monophysite Churches in the Middle East accept only one nature in the Son, a nature that is both human and divine in the incarnation.

The controversy over the Trinity resulted in a strong expression of anathema. Those who did not accept the Creed were stated to be lost, cast into Hell. Thus, the emphasis of Christianity came to be adherence to a belief system set in creedal formula, rather than a personal acceptance of God's sovereignty and consequent obedience, as in Islam. The development of sectarianism in Christianity reflects this emphasis on what you believe rather than what you do. Some Christians criticize Islam as being a religion of works rather than faith or belief.

The Athanasian Creed is of such complexity that the ordinary person, at least one not caught up in the intricacies of Christian theology, may have difficulty seeing the importance of its statements, and even their meaning. Once the Trinity is a full-blown doctrine, it by-passes some of the basic reasoning processes, to a ponderous and authoritarian pronouncement of "truth" rather than an illumination of it. This has a ramification in the theology of

the Church. The Church in Roman understanding holds the magisterium, or authority to teach without submitting its arguments to the judgement of the individual mind. This attitude is prevalent even among others that Roman Catholics, one might say especially among Protestants. The authority of the Church in maintaining the doctrine of the Trinity is generally of far greater weight with the Christian than are the .conclusions of his own reason and logic

The polemic tone of the Athanasian Creed above is removed from it as it appears in the actual liturgy of the Coptic Orthodox Church. As published in English, the reference to the Monophysite doctrine is missing, as well as the Latin filioque, which would be entirely unacceptable in any Orthodox setting. Although taken from a Coptic source, the following is essentially the same as that found among the Greek Orthodox and its .sister rites

۱. We believe in one God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, who created heaven and earth, and all things seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only…Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of light, true God of true God, begotten not created, of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; Who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became Man. And he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried. And the third

day He rose from the dead, according to the scriptures, ascended into the heavens; he sits at the right hand of his Father, and He is coming again in his glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end. Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life…Giver, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father .and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets

And in one holy, catholic and apostolic church. We confess one baptism for the .۲ remission of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the coming .age. Amen

Put very succinctly, the variations on Christian belief turn on a very few points. The whole of Western Christianity has come from the Roman Church and shares its basic creed, which is distinct in its addition of the filioque, that is, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Greek Orthodox agree with the Western Church on all creedal points except this one, and believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. The Eastern Orthodox form a position over and against that of both Roman and Greek Catholics. They hold the Monophysite doctrine that the incarnate Son has only one nature, which is wholly divine and wholly human at one and the same time. Roman and Greek Catholics maintain that the Son in incarnation .has two natures unmixed, one human and one divine

,From a creedal standpoint

Protestantism agrees with Roman Catholicism in the issues of the Trinity. Its point of creedal independence from Rome lies mainly in its concept of the Church. Furthermore, Protestantism is broken into many sects based on differing concepts of .the Church on one hand, and additional points of doctrine on the other

Some of the major Protestant concepts of the Church seem to be as follows. First of all, there is a broad understanding that the Church is a spiritual rather than visible institution, and that the universal Church of Christ is his mystical body, made up of all true believers. This rather spiritualized concept was developed apparently to facilitate Protestant rejection of Roman authority. However, within that rarified concept, Protestants have developed particular visible forms. Some of these maintain the system of bishops within a national framework, as found among Anglicans and Lutherans. The Reformed or Calvinistic concept retains the national Church under a system of presiding elders instead of bishops. The congregational concept is often seen to be a body of believers covenanted together, whose clergy draw their authority from the congregation, which works in a democratic way. This visible church of believers rejects the principle of a national Church. It should be noted that Protestantism is a logical continuation of the replacing of the family with the Church. The loss of family authority resulted in the elevation of the individual. The individual in society became the basic unit of the theory of national government. The concept of the Church

thus evolved naturally in the direction it did. It must be remembered that the breakdown of Roman structures in the Reformation did not change the basic mind-set, even with the rejection of the magisterium. Although Protestantism emphasizes the role of the mind in belief, the Church still retains its hegemony over individual reason. The splintering into a plethora of sects, each with its particular configuration .of beliefs, was inevitable

It is remarkable, however, that the doctrine of atonement is not overtly explained in the creeds. The death and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the forgiveness of sins, are mentioned. But the connection between that vicarious sacrifice on the cross and forgiveness is not made. The atonement is nevertheless central to Christian belief. The creeds assume the belief that humankind is totally helpless and lost in sinfulness, and completely dependent on the death and resurrection of Jesus in order to escape condemnation on the Day of Judgement and punishment in hell fire. But they do not express that belief clearly. It is probable that the lack of controversy on the atonement as compared to the Trinity accounts for this omission. The simplest creeds .lack a complete exposition of the Trinity as well

It is in the three great central doctrines of Christianity that it is most clearly distinguished from Islamic teaching: the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the Atonement, and the doctrine of the Church. These are issues that separate the two faiths. Islam postulates one God, who is sovereign

.and creedally undefined

Islam relies solely on divine grace in the judgement, without any reference to atoning sacrifice. Finally, the relationship between humankind and God is direct, without any institution mediating that grace. From this point of view Islam is remarkably simple in theology, whereas Christianity is convoluted and complex, with manifold variations on .the themes of Trinity, atonement, and authority

The Creedal doctrines which are similar to Islamic doctrine are belief in the return of .Jesus (AS), and the Day of Judgement

Extra-Creedal Developments .۳

point

Many Christian sects make a big issue of being non-creedal. In actuality, however, they have belief systems which are just as binding as the creeds. To be non-creedal does not mean that a sect has a different basis for its existence or its beliefs. It merely means that the formal recitation of its beliefs do not form a part of the liturgy. In fact, most of the sects actually conform to the belief systems of the creeds. They depart from them in two ways: either by additional beliefs, or by modification of one or more of the creedal doctrines. The rejection of the creeds is therefore almost never total. It merely paves the way for modification or addition. The basic, Roman Catholic doctrine is generally the continuing foundation. For example, Baptists claim to be non-creedal, but almost invariably accept the filioque theology, which is Roman as opposed to Greek and Eastern. That is, to the extent which they have a clear idea of what they believe, they believe that

.the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and not from the Father alone

European Antecedents ۳.۱

In the history of the Reformation in Europe, and in addition to the national churches, there are two major tendencies of continuing consequence. These are the Unitarian movement, and the Radical Reformation. The early Unitarians, following such figures as Servetus, Socinius, Blandrata, and Francis David, attacked the doctrine of the Trinity in favor of some form of One God. At the same time, they tended to retain the other creedal issues, such as that of the Church. The Radical Reformation, with such figures as Von Carlstadt, Jan de Leyden, Andreas Fischer, and Hubmeier to mention only a few, attacked the doctrine of the Church above all, but contained elements which questioned other doctrines, although few of them went so far as to question all .of the creedal doctrines

These are the sources of the older Christian sects, such as Unitarians, Baptists, Mennonites, and Congregationalists of various types. Unless they have been influenced by liberalism, they retain a belief much influenced by the creeds, with modifications on the Trinity and the Church. Again, the doctrine of the Atonement was not an issue from which a strong movement of dissent arose. The belief that Jesus died for our sins, and without faith in that death salvation is impossible, remains central to the traditional forms of these sects. There have been trends approaching ,Islam in the rejection of the Christian doctrine that all people are born sinful

but questioning the atonement itself is rare. Only liberalism has been able to make .inroad upon it, not contrasting religious faith

There are two trends which acted upon the national churches of Protestantism, and are logical reactions to the emphasis on intellectual belief as the basis of religion. These are spirituality or mysticism on one hand, and holiness or piety on the other. Dry intellectualism is rarely satisfying to the human psyche, and many people are attracted to matters with a more emotional appeal. Furthermore, belief which does not have an effect on action is easily perceived as hypocrisy. No wonder many Protestants began to consider actions important. These two influences cut across all barriers in Protestantism, colouring all of the Protestant churches well as giving birth to new ones. Spirituality gave rise to ecstatic behaviour, such as speaking in tongues .and popular singing, and sometimes even falling into trances and healing exercises

This is the root of the diverse Pentecostal movement. The Pietistic Movement had a similar effect, breaking Lutheranism, for example, into sects advocating strict behaviour and strong conformity to customs perceived as being devout. Having been so cut off from the Decalogue, however, by creedalism, such movements have tended to descend into trivial customs of piety, such as hairstyles and dress. The Methodist Church developed from a combination of both factors in Anglicanism. It has been able to incorporate both holiness and spirituality within the episcopal system .and continue to use the creed in its liturgy

This is

the doctrinal backdrop from which sprout the thousands of Protestant and ultra-protestant sects. It is now necessary to focus on some of these, since they are vocal .and fairly numerous in adherents throughout the world

American Movements ۳.۲

point

The new sects of Christianity which appeared in America in the ۱۹th century and continue to be of extreme importance can be divided into the restoration sects and the chiliastic sects. The former took the Protestant reevaluation of the Church to new logical heights, claiming to restore the Church of Christ to its primitive purity. This of course was a prime aspect of the Reformation as a whole. The chiliastic sects saw themselves as the logical historical development of Christianity for the end of the world, and they preached various systems of beliefs concerning the second coming of Christ. The three most visible of such American sects today are the Mormons or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints among the most popular of the restorationists, the Seventh-day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses among the .chiliasts

These sects all appeared and developed about the time of Darwinism and the Industrial Revolution. They have a common foundation in literalism, pragmatism, and materialism. Their organization is basically corporate, like the organizations of the industrial and business world. These two factors have contributed to their dynamic .success in the ۲۰th century as compared to older, more traditional sects

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ۳.۲.۱

In the beginning, Mormonism did not strongly question the creedal doctrines other than the Church and its restoration. It accepted the

main Christian doctrines. But over time, especially after the death of the founder Joseph Smith, the particular situation of the ۱۹th century contributed to a growing departure from the creedal doctrines of Christianity, so that many Christians today .would not consider Mormons Christians at all

Despite its foundation on Christian doctrine, with only a restoration concept of the Church and a new Scripture containing little or nothing doctrinally new, the Mormons have departed from the Creedal faiths to a surprising extent. The doctrine of the Trinity is completely replaced by an evolutionary scheme. Much of the experience relates either to baptism for the dead or the necessary rites which will ensure the peculiar Mormon eschatology, which is divine evolution for all of those who participate in the necessary rites. Besides this there is an emphasis on clean living and family .values, and the community of church activities

Contact with Islam is facilitated by the prohibition of alcohol as well as an inclination at least formerly to avoid flesh foods including pork, at least except in winter and in times of distress. A point of commonality is also in the former Mormon practice of .polygamy, which has long been discontinued by the main body

The Seventh–day Adventists ۳.۲.۲

Seventh-day Adventists represent precisely the opposite tendency as Mormonism. Although it began as a movement proclaiming the imminent and visible return of Christ, from the beginning it contained strong attacks on all three major creedal doctrines: the Trinity, the Atonement, and the Church. Many of the early Adventist leaders were

unitarian, believing in one God, and that Jesus is subordinate. The sanctuary doctrine, the distinctive doctrine of Adventism and a very complex configuration of beliefs, in essence attacks the final atonement for sin made on the cross, which is the generally accepted evangelical Protestant belief. In the beginning, there was a strong anti-ecclesiastical tendency in Adventism.

By the beginning of the ۱۹۰۰s Adventism had essentially forsaken its anti-ecclesiasticalism. It became a Christian Church. Anti-trinitarian beliefs died harder, and there was even a widespread debate about the nature of Christ in the ۱۹۷۰s, after which the Trinitarian doctrine was fully ratified, making official a situation which had already been practically true for a long time. Only in the matter of Atonement does Adventism still represent a mild criticism of what is generally accepted among Christians. Adventism today can be said to represent Western Christianity with some additional peculiarities.

Adventist belief is set forth in an official document containing ۲۷ articles. The first maintains the Bible as the only source of doctrine, an addition which identifies it as being a part of the Protestant Reformation. Catholic formulations would accept tradition as well as Scripture. Section ۲ is entitled the Trinity, and sections ۳-۵ define the three persons. The Son is called the eternal Son of God, identifying Adventism as a branch of Calvinism, but this is not the whole story. The section on the Holy Spirit is clearly Roman Catholic, based on the filioque doctrine and opposed to Greek Orthodoxy. The Atonement

is described with its ramifications up to section ۱۰. This exposition accepts original sin, but denies the radical Calvinist total depravity. Sections ۱۱-۱۳ give a Protestant concept of the Church, accepting the spiritual universal Church. This has so far .followed the creedal format

The rest of the Adventist statement goes beyond the creedal format. However, it follows the typical format of Protestant confessions of faith. The two Protestant ordinances come next, baptism and the Lord's supper, going outside the matter of belief to that of practice. Sections ۱۶ and ۱۷ justify the Adventist distinctive of having their own prophet, Ellen White. Sections ۱۸-۲۲ show a pietistic trend, referring to the Decalogue as a model of behaviour. Section ۲۳ inserts the Adventist distinctive, the sanctuary service which is seen as a necessary adjunct to Christ's death on the cross. Sections ۲۴-۲۷ present the second coming of Christ. Adventism maintains conditional immortality, which is a special and minority position on the creedal doctrine of .resurrection of the body

There are hundreds of Protestant sects that have similar statements in similar format. First of all come the creedal doctrines, sometimes mixed with and followed by the typically Protestant doctrines, followed by the specific, distinctive doctrines of the sect. This structure is a very logical response to the feeling that the creeds are top-heavy as compared to the Decalogue in emphasizing the definition of God to the detriment of the second section. The additions to the statements of belief that go beyond the creeds are halting

attempts to redress the imbalance which the creedal departures from the Decalogue represent. Rather than going back to the original, however, they are continued developments in the creedal tradition, tendencies toward solving the problem by .additional definitions

The Jehovah's Witnesses ۳.۲.۳

The Jehovah's Witnesses are a slippery breed. They produce a vast amount of literature, but not a brief summary of doctrine. Furthermore, their doctrine continues to change over time, so that old literature may not be an accurate expression of their .faith

Jehovah's Witnesses, as is typical of the radical reformation, question the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Church. They have replaced these with a doctrine which gives God a higher position than Jesus and denies the personality of the Holy Spirit. This is definitely a step towards Islam, although their concept of Jesus as divine of a lower order is still unacceptable, a fact they have been taught to conceal from their Muslim contacts. As for the Church, they have replaced this with the concept of a literal, physical kingdom of God, which is identical to the Jehovah's Witness .organization

There are several doctrines that seem to be fairly stable among Jehovah's Witnesses. The first is the importance of the name Jehovah or any variant of it from the tetragram or YHWH used in the Bible. Apparently God only responds to prayer addressed using this particular word as a specific name, the only valid one. In its radical manifestation, this doctrine considers prayer under any other formula to be .idolatry

They also make an issue of Jesus not dying on a cross but on a stake. However, they do not deny the Atonement. They believe in a particular eschatology that includes the state of death to be an unconscious one, and the establishment of the earthly .kingdom of Jesus (AS) upon his return

Jehovah's Witnesses, like Mormons and Adventists, emphasize clean living and family values, but are surprising to Muslims in their openness to the use of alcohol. The character of the religion is intransigent, and the degree of conformity is high. Their liturgy consists to a great extent in reading books of questions and answers. There is no discussion, and their missionary activities use discussion only to the extent that they find necessary for contact. It is difficult to have a discussion with them in which both sides accept the criterion of reason. They tend to remain authoritarian even in .the most open situations

British Movements ۳.۳

Among many British movements one might single out the Plymouth Brethren as the source of several groups with which Muslims are likely to come into contact. Darbyism as it may be called has since split into many groups. In the beginning there was some similarity with the new American religions, but in the end British conservatism determined the nature of the movement. The main attack on the creedal doctrines was in the doctrine of the Church. Darbyism is extremely disestablishmentarian. It rejects forms and formula, but in the end has produced a proliferation of is own forms

and dogmas, which tend to be conservative. A statement of beliefs cannot be obtained, but the beliefs presented by adherents are not complex or difficult to grasp, nor do they depart from traditional Christianity to the extent of the new American .movements

They retain a strongly critical attitude towards other groups, and it is precisely this stand against the Christian establishment that forms the largest common ground with Islam. Contact is usually not fruitful, however, as they too are generally more interested in getting their own teaching across than in an exchange in dialogue. People associated with the movement sometimes do street witnessing in British cities, .and this is the primary means of contact with Muslims

The extra-creedal doctrines are areas of opportunity for Islam. In that some of them question and reverse the three central Christian doctrines of the Trinity, Atonement, and the Church, parallels can be made which approach Islam. This is especially true for the unity of God (which many Christians will accept) and the reduction of ecclesiastical authority. The crucifixion generally remains problematic. Furthermore, various sects add doctrines that are similar to Islam, even when they retain the Creedal errors. Thus one finds here and there prohibitions of alcohol or unclean flesh, for example, as among Adventists and Mormons. All of these provide common areas .of belief upon which to build a relationship of trustful communication

On the other hand, some of the extra-creedal doctrines, such as the Mormon doctrine of the evolution of God, raise even higher barriers

than the creeds themselves. Such issues can be best met if one is provided with a statement of beliefs that can be evaluated. This is not always possible, in which case it is necessary to get the Christian to express his beliefs clearly and accurately.

4. The Decalogue and Islamic Belief

Islamic doctrine is also a response to the development of the Christian creeds. The history of the Christian creeds shows them to be very practical in origin. They often say what people feel needs to be said at a particular time, and are only afterward perceived as absolute expressions of truth. The two versions of the Athanasian Creed above show that very well, where the first is particular and polemic and the second universal and liturgical.

The structure of Matthew six reflects the local preoccupations of the time by giving alms, prayer, fasting, and probably pilgrimage as the basics of the religion of Jesus. Although this does not replace or conflict with the Decalogue, it does reveal a shift in issues. This shift in issues is valid for a vital faith, because it addresses the practical life of the people. When this shift in issues begins to conflict with the Decalogue, however, then we are faced with a new and different faith, which is the case with the Christian creeds.

In the beginning the Christian creeds reflected the burning issue of what to do with Jesus. As this shift in interest away from the Decalogue continued, the Decalogue as a source of doctrine was forgotten and the creeds

began to define Jesus in terms that were in literal conflict with the Decalogue, while preserving the essential structure of that document. The structure of the Decalogue which is the proclamation of God followed by a list of logically implied commands, beliefs, and values, is evident from the Mosaic document down through Islam, the Christian creeds, and finally to the latest versions of sectarian Christian statements of .beliefs

The Decalogue, as the name implies, has traditionally been seen to exist in ten sections, although there is some variation in how these sections are divided. Interestingly enough, the Islamic statement of the essentials of faith and practice preserves this structure of ten. The Islamic presentation is in two sections also, the roots and the branches. The roots or fundamentals of faith are five: the Unity of God, Divine Justice, Apostleship, Divine Guidance, and the Day of Judgement. The branches are ten: prayer in prostration, the month of fasting, pilgrimage, zakat and khums (the two forms of charity), holy endeavour, enjoining good, preventing evil, love of the .godly, and avoidance of the wicked

It is quite clear that these two groups correspond to the two sections of the Decalogue, and that the latter group, the branches of faith, corresponds rather precisely to the exposition of issues in Jesus' (AS) presentation in Matthew six. Islamic belief, like Christian, is the product of taking the Decalogue as a point of departure and defining faith in terms of contemporary issues. The difference is that Islam does not

conflict with the document of origin, but rather adds to it in ways both consistent with .the original and relevant to new problems

This is seen in the way the roots are expressed. The first principle is divine unity, corresponding to the first commandment of the Decalogue. There are four principles that are logically drawn from divine unity. If God is One, He is thereby impartial and if impartial, then intrinsically just. Since He is just, he reveals the basis for His judgement of humans, firstly in verbal revelation through the prophets, and secondly through the practical application of divine guidance. This implies finally human responsibility before God in a judgement. All of these are logically implicit in the unity .of God

The consistent development of Islamic doctrine is also seen in the way the branches are portrayed. The second commandment prohibits prostration to false gods. The implication is prostration to the One True God alone. It is at this point where the defining of the branches of faith begins. The other nine branches of faith are similarly logical sequences from the practice of prayer in prostration. There is thus nothing inconsistent with the Decalogue. Islam is shown to be a consistent transmission of the .most ancient revelation, applied to new situations with the shift in issues

.Theology Christian and Islamic: an evaluation .۵

Among the more important divisions of theology from a Christian standpoint of belief are theology proper or the doctrine of God, soteriology or the doctrine of salvation, ecclesiology or the doctrine of the Church, and eschatology

or the doctrine of last things. We have noted that in terms of eschatology, the differences between Christianity and Islam are small. We have also seen that throughout its history, Christianity has been able to discuss and re-evaluate its thought in regard to the Church and in regard to God, producing a number of mutually exclusive and conflicting alternatives, some of which approach Islam. It is the doctrine of salvation where the lines are drawn most clearly and abruptly between the two faiths. Christianity does not budge an inch on the belief that Jesus died on the cross and that this death was necessary in order for God to forgive sin. Thus a doctrinal path of dialogue can be envisioned, beginning with what is common and ending with .what is most divisive

A discussion with Christians on the matter of end time events, signs of the return of Christ, and the importance of the Day of Judgement is a good opening. If some amount of agreement can be found in those areas, it establishes a point of contact .and readiness to discuss more difficult issues

The second most fruitful area of discussion is that of the Church. Especially evangelical Christians will respond favourably to the Islamic idea of direct responsibility before God, without the vehicle of a priestly, ecclesiastical function. In this matter Islam and evangelical Christianity have similar beliefs, in contrast to the more authoritarian forms of Christianity. In contact with Catholics, the point of commonality is the similarity between the

.authority of the Pope and that of the Imam in Shi'ite practice

In the matter of the Trinity, Christians are historically accustomed to making this issue complex and mysterious on one hand, and absolutely essential to faith on the other. The prevailing Christian attitude, historically speaking, is that one's destiny depends on having God defined properly. Muslims have traditionally clung to the unity of God, which essentially implies refusal to define God and recognition that God, being sovereign, is not definable in human terms. In some cases it is possible to cut out the interminable discussions with Christians on the Trinity by referring to the unity of God .as an absolute, as the recognition of the ineffable character of God

If discussion of the Trinity occurs, several things will become soon apparent. Firstly, the Muslim has the upper hand in terms of both logic and in terms of Scripture. The Christian Scriptures fail to provide a secure basis for the doctrine of the Trinity, whereas a good foundation for the unity of God can be made on the basis of the Bible. Secondly, in the face of reason and Scripture, the Christian will fall back on tradition, the creed, or ecclesiastical authority, covered by desperate quibbling on Scriptural interpretation. Either a Christian will be easy or nearly impossible to convince on the .matter of the unity of God. There is no middle ground

Nevertheless, theological formulation on the doctrine of God has a common foundation in Islam and Christianity, one largely based on

Greek philosophy. The Western formulation is still greatly dependent on Thomas Aquinas, whose theology owes much to Al-Ghazali and others. There is a clear correspondence between the divine attributes taught in Christian theology, and those taught in Islam. All agree on the acceptance of negative and positive attributes. The positive attributes in Shi'ite thought are ۱) Eternity, ۲) Omnipotence, ۳) Omniscience, ۴) All-Perception, ۵) Self-existence, ۶) Absolute Independence of will and action, ۷) Creation of Speech, ۸) Absolute Truthfulness. The negative attributes are rejection of ۱) compounding, ۲) accommodation, ۳) incarnation, ۴) visibility, ۵) need, ۶) association, ۷) change, and ۸) addition of qualities. Sunnism seems to reject only the last of these.

Classical Western theology appeals to many of the same attributes on the same basis. Only the seventh positive attribute is generally unknown to Christians. All of the others are not only acceptable, but more or less normative, especially the first three. Among the negative attributes the fourth and seventh, visibility and change, are most commonly admitted. This situation is logically inconsistent with the Trinity. The influence of Al-Ghazali and other Islamic scholars on Christian theology has been so extensive, that Christian theological formulation nearly always includes vast areas of mixing incompatible motifs, Islamic and Trinitarian, without achieving a rational synthesis. One need only ask how is it possible to maintain the negative attributes of visibility and change, and yet admit incarnation, which effects not only change in the deity, but makes the deity visible, at least in first

century Palestine. Christian doctrine is at its most vulnerable precisely in its most sophisticated formulations. Unfortunately, most Christians do not have the resources for discussing matters on that level. On the other hand, if the Muslim makes an issue of the unity of God to be a refusal to engage in theological definition of God, the Christian may turn the argument against Islam by noting that Greek-based theological formulation also exists in Islam, in its acceptance of positive and negative .attributes of God

The matter of soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, is even more difficult. Although there is a variety of thought on why Jesus had to die, and on how his death makes forgiveness for sin possible, there is little desire among Christians to question the Atonement as such. Among the classical ideas are that the death of Christ was redemptive, that is, it bought the sinful human being from Satan, who was the lawful master because of sin, and that sin requires the death sentence in order to satisfy the justice of God, and that Christ's death is the substitute for everyone who claims it before God. A more modern thought is that human beings are incapable of accepting forgiveness until they realize the love of God in providing His Son as a sacrifice for them. Needless to say, many Christians find these justifications lacking, without .thereby rejecting the doctrine of Atonement

It is therefore of little use for the Muslim to point out the weakness of these classical justifications

for the doctrine. The real difference between Islam and Christianity on this matter is a difference in the understanding of what sin is. For the Christian generally, sin is a cosmic evil in the world into which every human is born, and which can be overcome only through a cosmic event which does battle with that evil and overcomes it. The death of Christ is the highpoint of that battle. For the Muslim, sin is failure to obey a divine command. It needs only to be reversed and put right insofar as possible, to be atoned by repentance and good faith shown in good deeds, and finally forgiven simply .by divine grace

The general Islamic approach to Atonement is just as intransigent as the Christian doctrine itself. It generally consists in the outright denial of the dead of Jesus. This of course puts an end to the discussion. However, what must be maintained in Islam is that the death of Jesus (or anyone else) can have no objective influence on God's ability or will to forgive sins. For Shi'ites, to admit the possibility of the death of Jesus merely opens the possibility of seeing it in much the same light as the death of Imam Husseyn (AS). There is no possibility of discussion between Muslims and Christians on this issue without compromise on one side or the other. Evangelical Christians, however, are left speechless when confronted with the Islamic statement that God forgives by His infinite grace alone, to which no

.human sacrifice can add anything

Tying the Knot .۶

The areas of contrast between Christian and Islamic belief can be charted simply as .follows

Christianity

Islam

One God in Three Persons

One God alone

Forgiveness through human sacrifice

Forgiveness by infinite divine grace

The Church the only way to God

Direct access to God for every believer

Although Christians will balk at the thought that the death of Jesus on the cross in Christian teaching is essentially a human sacrifice, and some will deny the authority of the Church, this simple caricature of the differences between Christianity and Islam should make the Christian stop and think. It may well be that worship of one God alone, and the realization that he has direct access to God without recourse to any institutions, and free forgiveness of sin through the infinite grace of God, is what he .really always thought was true and right. After all, all are born Muslim

Christian and Islamic Practice Compared

point

Truly those who believe in what is revealed to you, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabeans: whoever (of them) believe in God, and the Last Day, and do good works, for them there is their reward with their Lord, and there shall be no

.fear for them nor shall they grieve. Qur'an (Suratul-Baqara) ۲:۶۲

The purpose of this essay is to describe the similarities and differences between Christian and Islamic practice. This is useful in understanding what others consider of importance in religious life, and thus how to achieve fruitful dialogue. From an Islamic point of view praxis is in fact

of more critical interest than from the Christian point of view in general. Christians, especially Protestants, are more likely to focus on belief than practice. In sharing Islam, this is one of the vital areas. To put it concretely, difficult as it may be to convince a Christian of the unity of God, it is even more difficult to influence a Christian .to pray in prostration with regularity

Christian Practice .١

Christian practice may be divided into two categories: ١) those practices requiring the intervention of a priest and ٢) individual practices, or those not requiring the intervention of a priest. The former are called sacraments in Western Christianity and mysteries in Eastern Christianity. This is the fundamental difference between Islamic and Christian practice. The Muslim does not need the Church as a channel of grace but may approach God directly in all matters. Historically speaking, medieval Islam had a strong influence on Christianity, notably in the radical reform which produced the freer forms of Christianity such as Baptists and Pentecostals, who also minimize .the sacramental character of baptism and the Lord's supper

The sacraments or mysteries number seven: these are baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, confession, marriage, ordination, and unction. These are all matters which convey a divine blessing through the medium of an ordained priest. One cannot perform them for oneself. Only two sacraments are retained in the reformed churches: baptism and the Eucharist. Islam knows no sacramental principle at all, but does consider certain of its practices central, much as the sacraments are

central to Christianity. These are termed the branches of the faith, and include prayer in prostration, fasting, pilgrimage, alms (zakat and khums), jihad, fostering good, .avoiding evil, love of the righteous, and avoidance of the wicked

In baptism the priest sprinkles or pours water on the infant, or immerses the infant in water, one or three times. Baptism is necessary for salvation according to most Christian belief. In exceptional circumstances, such as imminent death, a child may be baptized by an unordained person. Baptism is done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is done once and for all, and is often considered valid, even if the child eventually apostatizes. Thus Christian parents of young people who revert to Islam often comfort themselves with the thought that at least they have baptized .their children

In the radical reformation the sacramental character of baptism was challenged in several ways. Baptism was considered a sign of obedience and a witness of faith, rather than an objective channel of grace. Thus adults only, who were of an age to bear witness to faith, were baptized. Although ordination continued and baptism was still performed by an ordained person, the idea of priestly authority was dismissed. The form of baptism attempted to conform to earlier Judeo-Christian practices, specifically in requiring immersion. Finally, the formula was sometimes doubted, and the name of Jesus substituted for the trinitarian phrase. One or more of these variants are still dominant in the modern denominations coming

out of the radical reformation, such as Baptists, Mennonites, Pentecostals, Adventists, .Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons

The Eucharist consists of the blessing of the wine and bread and the dispensing of it to the congregants. The traditional belief is that the action of the priest turns the bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ, and by eating and drinking these, the communicant receives grace objectively into him or herself. The Reformation has caused some doubt and disturbance around this issue. The real presence has been doubted to some extent by the Lutherans and Anglicans, but more radically by the Calvinists, who consider the bread and wine to be symbols or signs of the real spiritual .presence of Christ in the event

There has been controversy on the issue of giving both elements or only one to the congregant. Again under the indirect influence of Islam on the radical reformation, some of the modern denominations issuing from it today reject the use of alcoholic wine, and replace it with non-alcoholic grape juice or even water. An ordinance or footwashing to precede the supper is an issue of controversy in the radical reform. This however seems to be the result of a literal interpretation of John ۱۴ rather than an influence of Islam. Finally, in the same quarters there are controversies over the .use of a single cup or individual cups in the Lord's supper

Although the Reformation Churches traditionally accept only the first two sacraments, something of the sacramental character

has remained with the others as well. In those churches having an episcopal system, a bishop is needed for ordination. In nearly all churches it is the practice for an ordained clergyman to perform marriages, and marriage by individual contract is not recognized as marriage in Christianity. Even the Quakers, who reject all traditional forms and sacraments, perform marriages in public meeting. Baptism and the blessing of the bread and wine are performed by an ordained clergyman, even when the sacramental character of the rites is denied and the ordination of the clergyman is based merely upon the democratic election and blessing given by the congregation. Confirmation is still practiced by the churches which perform infant baptism. Even confession and the last rites of unction are becoming popular in Reformation .Churches that used to consider them uniquely Catholic

There is nothing in Islam which compares with the sacraments or the practices in free Christianity derived from them. From an Islamic point of view, the sacraments function primarily to establish the authority of the Church and its power over the fate of the people. Sacraments are essentially non-Islamic in form, function, meaning, and antecedents. The only point of contact is the tenuous Jewish root for baptism. The New Testament describes the transfer of Jewish proselyte baptism by immersion into a Christian rite expressing acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. There is thus an .historical connection with the Jewish purity rites

However, non-Jewish and non-Scriptural sources for baptism are much more visible, and

baptism is a poor vehicle to try to get Christians to understand ablutions and the purity code of Islam. The Eucharist has a New Testament foundation as well, in the last supper of Jesus with his disciples as described in the Gospels. But it too in Christianity has taken on a good deal from pagan sacrificial rites which are thinly disguised ritual cannibalism. Such compromises were the necessary price in order to .make Christianity the religion of the Roman state in the fourth century

Although the Christian sacraments offer few openings for dialogue, the non-clerical Christian practices are that much better. The major traditional, non-clerical Christian practices are prayer, hymnsinging, fasting, and the giving of alms in charity. Three of these correspond to Islamic practice. Unfortunately, the one contrasting practice, hymn-singing, is the most popular. Christian pilgrimage to sacred sites used to be much more prevalent than it is today, although it continues to be important in some .Catholic and oriental areas

Prayer .۲

As in Islam, in traditional Christianity prayer appears both at set times and in voluntary individual events. The canonical hours, like the times of prayer in Islam, have their roots in Biblical and Near Eastern tradition. It is not difficult for Catholics and Orthodox people to understand this. The tradition has remained among Anglicans as well. Other Protestants divide prayer into public and private, with no daily set times .of prayer

This of course makes it difficult to reach them. Their immediate response to Islamic prayer in prostration is that

it is a mere form. The source of this criticism is that its lack of spontaneity indicates a lack of spirituality. This criticism may be met by pointing out that Protestant prayer is also performed at a specific time in public worship and that includes traditional forms. If the lack of spontaneity condemns Islamic prayer, then public Protestant prayer is condemned by the same argument. Furthermore, the times and forms of public Protestant prayer have only the weakest possible Biblical justification, as there is no Biblical reference to Sunday prayer, the folding of hands in prayer, or even the kneeling gesture commonly used. On the other hand, both the times and gestures of .Islamic prayer are abundantly attested in the Christian Scriptures

As for the voluntary prayers, again Catholics and Orthodox people will be able to relate to the Islamic use of set supplications. Even in public prayer, some Protestants reject composed prayers, requiring that the one who prays invent the phrases of the prayer at the moment of praying, thus preserving the spontaneity and thereby the spirituality of the prayer. Criticism of Islamic prayer on this basis can be met as follows. Firstly, all Islamic prayer traditions provide the possibility for personal, spontaneous expression of one’s personal needs, desires, petitions, confessions, and .words of praise

The structure of Islamic prayer, its formalism, does not exclude personal choice of expression. Secondly, there are so many set prayers, that it is easy to find in the repertoire of Islamic supplications prayers which

fit one's specific condition and situation. Thirdly, formalism is not necessarily a negative matter, but can form the structure for an act of obedience. Fourthly, a systematic observance of public Protestant prayers will show that, despite the demand that they be spontaneous, in point of fact, they are invariably composed of a set of traditional formula common to an individual, a congregation, or a denominational tradition. There is even a traditional intonation of voice, which may .not be verbally described, but which is considered necessary

There is a Protestant type of intoning. Presently there is a trend away from this, which is supposed to be more spiritual, but which in reality is a mimicry of emotional language, even the language of physical love. The use of the microphone has made it possible for the one praying in public to use a voice which is similar to the voice he or she might use when crooning in the ear of a lover. The level of spontaneity in any case in Protestant prayer is far lower than is generally perceived. Furthermore, the .spontaneity which does exist does not always lend itself to increased spirituality

Fasting .۳

Fasting is another practice common to both Islam and Christianity which can be better appreciated by Catholics, Orthodox and even Anglicans than by the nonconformist traditions. The former are aware of set times for fasting, whereas the latter fast only as personal vows. Some non-conformist churches have a set time for fasting, such as a particular day

of the month, but this is a matter of order rather than rule. Fasting and prayer are understood in Christianity as going together and are especially appropriate for petition, prayer for specific things, such as healing. Although the set fasting among Christians, most notably Lent and formerly Wednesdays and Fridays, generally merely limits the kinds of foods which may be eaten, Christians often have the habit of accusing Islam of hypocrisy in fasting because the fast does not apply to the night. It is a fact of human existence that a total fast, as in Islam, cannot be carried out for .thirty consecutive days

Either the content of the fast or the timing must be adjusted for the very practical reason of preserving life and well-being. The Christian criticism of Islamic fasting is thus entirely irrational, and sometimes it is necessary to point that out. The actual discomfort involved in fasting is probably generally greater in Islam than in Christianity, since it pertains to drinking water as well as abstaining from food. If Islam contended for a total thirty-day fast, the hue and cry of Christians would certainly be greater than it is, since it would cost the life of many engaged in it. Does the Christian criticism imply that Muslims then should not fast at all? In that case Christians would be denying Muslims a practice which is also a part of their own tradition. If the Christian criticism implies that Muslims should fast in the way the Christians

do, one may ask for the Scriptural justification for the Lenten fast. The Bible .recognizes only the total fast, the fast which Muslims perform

Alms and Purity .۴

Muslims and Christians share the tradition of giving alms in charity. The Christian concept probably relates mostly to the need to support the poor and the need to curb greed. The Islamic concept of alms relates to the broader issue of purity on one hand, and to the desire to empathize with the hungry on the other. It would be logical to approach Christians in dialogue about the purity code through the practice of alms in .charity

This is difficult, however, because Christians fail to see the connection between the two. For the Christian, the giving of alms is a practical matter relating to economics, whereas the concept of purity is completely incomprehensible to them. The reason for this is the fact that purity rites are of far less occurrence in European pre-Christian traditions than they are in the Middle East. Christianity is the European institution which carries most conservatively the pre-Christian values of European spirituality. To a great extent it is old European paganism which lives on in Christianity rather than a faith derived from Middle Eastern sources. This is true even of many aspects of .Ashkenazi Judaism as well

Among the Islamic purity practices are circumcision of male children, ablutions, alms in charity, and avoidance of impure food. Of these Christians are most likely to understand the food issue. There are in fact some sects of

Christianity which follow a Biblical pattern of eating, at least to some extent. The one most likely to come into contact with Muslims is the Seventh-day Adventist. These people eat essentially the same meats as Ja'feri Muslims, but fail to take into account the Scriptural slaughter practices by which the blood is drained from the animal. The reason for this is obviously the fact that the purity code in general is misapprehended. Many Adventists consider their food laws to be a part of health practice rather than .purity

Needless to say, the Torah or Tawrat supports Islamic food practices. Despite the fact that the New Testament, in the only recorded verdict given by the early church in Acts ۱۵, states that the laws of proper slaughter apply to non-Jewish converts to Christ, Christianity has failed to follow its own Scriptures. The reason for this is the fact that all peoples are most conservative in their food practices, and the non-Jewish character of the Christian movement seemed to necessitate relinquishing food .practices at the time

The failure of Christians to circumcise their male children is based on two factors. The first is that circumcision is not traditional in pre-Christian Europe. The second is the Christian misapprehension of a first century split in Judaism. At the time some Hellenistic Jews favored the conversion of adult males to Judaism without circumcision, whereas the Palestinian establishment strongly urged circumcision on all male proselytes. The debate entered early Christianity as well, and the New Testament contains

a great deal of matter on the quarrel in the writing of Paul, whose position was that for an adult male proselyte to become circumcised was incompatible with faith in the Messiah. Christians rely on his rejection of adult circumcision to justify their neglect of .circumcising their children

As for ablutions, there remain in Christianity only what ancient Middle Eastern practices of ablutions may have contributed to baptism and the very limited practice of foot-washing. The former is usually seen as a rite of entrance into the church and symbolic of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. The latter is seen as an expression of humility. Both have thus lost their character as rites of purity and taken on the focus of submission to the authority of the church. The discussion of ablutions in the New Testament is limited to an argument between Jesus (AS) and some interpreters of the law on the question of ablutions of the hands before eating. Since this Jewish custom is not mentioned in the Torah at all, Jesus (AS) is perfectly consistent in rejecting it. The implication is that he accepts ablutions mentioned in the Torah. Although this argument is eminently rational, the Christian aversion to .ablutions cannot generally be overcome merely by an appeal to their own Scriptures

Hymn–singing .۵

Perhaps the favorite Christian spiritual practice is hymnsinging. This is completely unacceptable in Islam, and even the tradition in some countries of using the ilaahi does not compare with it. The only point of contact

is to be found in some exaggerated forms of Sufism, where music is used as a vehicle for producing ecstatic behaviour. Music has had several functions in Christianity. The earliest was in the propagation of dogmas about which various Christian groups disagreed. Music was thus a major vehicle in the struggle between Christian heresy .and orthodoxy

One might expect that debate and reason would be preferable tools, but historically speaking this is not so. The second great function of music in Christianity was historically the expression of the Trinity, and this found its way not only into the words of the songs, but in the very musical structures themselves, which repeated tri-part patterns. The third great function of music in Christianity was the support of authoritarian institutions through emotionally overwhelming pageantry. Western music thus supported the European monarchies on one hand, and a religion with a monarchical character on the other. Both Calvinist and Lutheran reform utilized music .for their own purposes against Rome

Anglican music has been of such a character to emphasize both the monarchical character of the church as well as its Englishness in contrast to Rome. Part of the break with Rome was bolstered by the incorporation of folk styles into Lutheran and Calvinistic worship, and this corresponded with the rejection of the pontifical authority. The intrusion of folk styles of music into Christian worship gave rise to an increasing play on the individual emotions and the individual spiritual experience. This has resulted in the varieties

.of religious music we find today

These are traditional styles in the more conservative churches, reflecting their role in the Reformation, and new styles in the more radical movements. Since the introduction of the Protestant hymn in England in the early ۱۷۰۰s, Anglo-Saxon Christianity has gone on a deeper and deeper progression toward utilizing the sensual emotions of the individual as a vehicle for spiritual experience. That is why there is little or no difference between the music styles found in non-conformist churches and .those found in discos and nightclubs. Both appeal to the same emotions

The justification for using such music is generally that the young people like it, and it attracts them to the church. This is the old argument used for the inclusion of Greek theatre music in Byzantine worship as early as the fifth century. That concession has resulted in the development of the Byzantine liturgical tradition. It is doubtful that the rock mass will produce anything as esthetically appealing as that, however, to say .nothing of Baptist and Pentecostal crooning

Music which appeals to the emotions of awe, although it may well have originally served to support an authoritarian church, may well have the same esthetic value as music intended to support the royal courts of Europe. An interest in such classical music may not be harmful. Research indicates that for the most part it fosters balanced physical functions in the body. The same research clearly suggests, however, that not only rock but other lighter styles which

were developed and became popular in the twentieth century actually cause physical imbalances in bodily functions, such as increasing heart rate and galvanic skin responses, and correspondingly causing indigestion and even weakening the immune system.

Despite the plethora of such research over the last twenty years, music of this type continues to be not only an expression of Western culture, but a foremost and effective means of propagating it. Put briefly, music which appeals to sensual emotions is a medium of control. Christians do not use such music out of obedience to God, or because they think it fosters strong morals or spiritual development. They use it because they like it. They use it because it has a drug-like effect on mind and body.

The Islamic rejection of such dangerous types of music may be the most important distinction between Christian and Islamic practice. Considering the proven harmful effects of rock and popular music, it may well be that the benefits of prayer in prostration, fasting, pilgrimage, and alms are largely outweighed by the deleterious effects of such music. Western music, with the exception of parts of the classical tradition, is among the greatest threats to Islam. There can be no compromise nor any path of approach between the two faiths on this matter.

۶. Modesty

Although following fashions in dress has an aspect which seems inimical to Islam, it is worth considering that Islamic dress is the practice which is most visible to non-Muslims. Islam cannot make any concessions to Western criticism or

desires in the matter of bodily modesty. Muslims ought, however, to foster concession in this matter in terms of style. It is perfectly appropriate for immigrant Muslims to continue to use the dress styles of their home country. It is not appropriate to give the impression that Europeans reverting to Islam ought to follow the same styles. They ought to follow the same standards of modesty, but in styles appropriate to their own .country and culture

The truth is that Islam, Christianity, and Judaism share traditional standards of modesty. There are still areas of the world where Christians dress with the same modesty as traditional Muslims, although they have greatly decreased in the last century. It is a misapprehension that modesty is a trait unique to Islam. It is scandalous that a political conflict has been made of this issue in many areas, especially in Europe, considering that Christians in theory have the same duties, .according to their own faith, as do Muslims

European Muslims have sometimes failed in the matter of style. Perhaps some propagators of Islam have put too much emphasis on the principles of modesty and too little on how they ought to be adapted to new situations. There has been a tendency, especially among women, to copy foreign styles. This is one of the foremost barriers to embracing Islam by Westerners. They get the impression that one must dress in black and cover the face, because that is the way women dress in one or another country. There

should be a movement among European Muslim women towards designing and acquiring styles of clothing which preserve Islamic modesty while at the same time recognizing features of Western dress styles. Unless this is done, Islam has a future in Europe only among those who marry immigrant Muslims or are attracted by exotic, .foreign dress

Social Contracts .۷

Islam and Christianity differ greatly in the matter of social contracts. In Islam, a free individual has the right and indeed obligation to make certain contracts with others which are binding under religious law and consequently even under secular law in such countries which recognize Islam. The right of individual contract is greatly diminished under other religious and legal systems, such as those dominant in the West. Marriage, for example, has already been seen to have a sacramental character in Christianity, and even where this is minimal, to be established only through the intervention of an authoritarian establishment. Two individuals do not have the right .in Christian contexts to contract a legally binding marriage

The attempt of Christians to do so is generally considered fornication. The same generally holds true for other types of individual contracts, such as buying and selling, renting, or other matters. The law intervenes to determine the forms of individual contract, which are rights essentially granted by law rather than recognized by law. Thus the marriage of church and state in Western societies continues, even when ostensibly weakened, to govern individual freedom of contract in ways which contrast with Islamic practice, whether or

.not actual conflict is present

In dialogue with Christians, therefore, the issue of personal contract is one difficult to get across. The Christian has a tendency to consider contracts not having legal or ecclesiastical control to be less than serious. In such cases they depend solely on the word of honor. For Muslims, personal contracts are made within the Islamic experience, and imply binding responsibility before God and consequently legal binding as well. Perhaps the best way to get this across to a Christian in dialogue is to make a comparison to Christian sacraments. An Islamic contract has for the Muslim the same sacredness as a Church sacrament for a Christian. Some Christians may be positively surprised that Islam recognizes an individual freedom in such matters .which is lacking in Christian society

۸. "Holy War"

The practice of jihad or "holy War" as it is so often called in English is one of the areas in which Islam is much criticized. Much of the problem arises from a misapprehension of Islam and a desire to find fault with the religious tradition perceived to be behind "acts of terrorism." Much of this can be dispelled immediately with the realization that struggle in the way of God is primarily a struggle with oneself rather than with others. Furthermore, the struggle of the pen is of much greater importance than the struggle .of the sword

In addition, historically speaking, it is Christianity which is the faith of the sword and not Islam. With few exceptions, Islam has been

spread by peaceful means, mostly through commercial ties. With no exceptions the whole of Europe was Christianized through military conquest. If there are any criticisms to be made about the historical spread of Islam, they should certainly not be tendered by a Christian, who on the issue of forced conversions has no honorable .recourse but embarrassed silence, or the dishonorable recourse of ignorance

Muslims have rarely lost sight of the Qur'anic principle of no compulsion in Islam. Christians have nearly always lost sight of the fact that the greatest single massacre in the history of the world was the conquest of Mexico, in which millions of Indians were baptized by force, only to join the millions more who lost their lives in the first three years of Catholic power. Before that catastrophe all people should be struck .dumb with the determination that it should never happen again

Nevertheless, struggle in the way of God is an Islamic imperative. It implies active participation in the defence of good before the onslaught of evil. Beyond that, it implies offensive measures whereby good might overcome evil. The range of action is not only individual, but within the family, the neighbourhood, and in all society. In this there may be both contrasts and similarities between Islam and Christianity. The practical ideal, at least since the Reformation, has been to make Christianity the handmaiden of the State. Although in practice Islam has been the handmaiden of empires, a more fundamental perception would be to see the

State as the handmaiden of Islam. Whatever the case, there is a tendency in both religions to see a religious duty in fostering good and opposing evil. To what extent this is seen to be the duty of the individual or the State depends on the time and .situation more than on religious considerations

In dialogue with Christians, the subject of struggle in the way of God, when carefully and rightly perceived, can be a major area of common ground. There are many matters of social and moral importance in which Muslims and at least some segment of Christianity agree. The abuse of alcohol is among the most obvious, and there exist entire sects of Christianity, not to mention the temperance movements, which join .Islam in its rejection of alcoholic drink

A newer area of possible common interest is the popular one of animal rights. It is strange that Islam is often perceived as the aggressor in this matter, when the well-being and welfare of animals intended for slaughter is so fundamental an issue in Islamic law and practice, that an animal which has been mistreated in any way just prior to being slaughtered is considered unfit for consumption. Animal rights activists have generally chosen to ignore Islam or to include it in their camp of enemies, and this comes from both a misapprehension of Islamic practice and the desire to tap into .prejudices against Islam in order to bolster their own cause in the eyes of the public

The former factor

is one of ignorance, and the latter simply immoral. Animal rights activists would do well to show integrity by recognizing the real contribution of Islam to their area of interest. Although Islam supports the use of violence in defence, its rejection of violence goes far beyond that of Christianity in both practice and principle, so that the violence perpetrated on animals in the Western meat industry would be inconceivable .in an Islamic context

In the matter of jihad, the dialogue with Christians can well be made through participating in areas of social, economic, and even political reform which in principle attract both parties. Participation in such movements can open contacts of trust and .good-will between Muslims and Christian so that further dialogue can take place

Breast–beating, Weeping, and Reverential Prostration .۹

There are Islamic practices which seem exotic and foreign to Western Christians, but which when examined carefully provide opportunity for dialogue. Among these are the practices of breast-beating and weeping to express sorrow as a religious value, and reverential prostration as distinct from prostration in worship. These practices in Islam are useful openers to dialogue for two reasons. First of all, their exotic foreignness can awaken curiosity in some people. Such interest can be stimulated as .well by inviting non-Muslim friends to observe Ashura practices and events

The second way such practices are an opportunity for opening dialogue is their Biblical antecedents. These practices do not conflict with Christianity and are not intrinsically polemic. The fact that they are supported by Biblical texts will come as a surprise

to Christians. By establishing that the Bible supports Islamic practices that Christians will generally consider innocuous and perhaps even interesting, the Muslim prepares the way for Christians to consider that their own Scriptures perhaps support Islam in other areas as well. It is better to start finding common Biblical ground in non-polemic .matters, before presenting Biblical arguments for such issues as the unity of God

Summary .۱۰

Islam and Christianity are sister faiths. They have more in common, both in belief and practice, than they have which separates them. This fact is clouded by a history of conflicts and the tradition of focusing on differences often to the exclusion of common ground. In terms of practice, Islam and Christianity share prayer, fasting, alms, pilgrimage, and in reality even the famous "holy war." There are definite differences in .detail, but the principle practices remain similar

It is both a psychological imperative and a recognition of reality to approach dialogue from the point of view of common ground. This approach often ends in merely ignoring differences and agreeing to an uneasy and unrealistic truce. Rather, it can be the point of departure for an aggressive mission, one which is realistically tempered by the realization that the common ground may also provide an area in which each can learn from each. There is nothing more futile than one-sided, bigoted .missionizing

The differences between Christian and Islamic practices go beyond mere details, however. There are certain practices, such as the Christian use of music, which are completely unacceptable

to Islam, and have to be recognized as such. More subtly, even the practices in common have fundamental differences, some of which go to the very foundational differences between the faiths. When such Christian practices function to foster ecclesiastical authority and even sacramentalism, they depart essentially from Islam. In dialogue with Christians, it is essential eventually to get across not only the details of Islamic practice, but what they mean psychologically, functionally, and spiritually. There is always the danger that in reverting to Islam, a Christian will bring along spiritual baggage which is inconsistent with Islamic faith and practice. But even dialogue which does not result in people embracing Islam is most useful when it increases real understanding of why people practice what they do and how they .experience the practice of their faith

Western Barriers to Islam and How to Meet Them

point

Those who devour usury will not stand except as stands one whom the Evil One by his touch has driven to madness. That is because they say: "Trade is like usury," but Allah has permitted trade and forbidden usury. Those who after receiving direction from their Lord, desist, shall be pardoned for the past; their case is for Allah (to judge); but those who repeat (the offence) are Companions of the Fire: They will abide therein (forever). Qur'an ۲:۲۷۵

A Profile of Secularism .۱

point

It is often rather a simple matter to get Westerners to admit the unicity of God. But this rarely leads to their embracing Islam as a way of life. This study will focus on the trouble spots

which prevent people from moving consistently from belief to practice. Among these will be the status of women, interest, dress, the use of alcohol, music, art, the confusing of culture and religion, traditional and historical fear of Islam, and prejudice. Each of these present different challenges and require different ways of confronting .them, although they have their roots in the same problem

The preponderance of difficulties we are now approaching have their source in Western secularism. If one is able to convince a believing Christian that the Bible is actually more supportive of Islam than it is of Christianity, there is every likelihood that the other barriers to embracing Islam will be negligible. The secular person may well be willing to admit the unicity of God in defiance of Christian belief, but such defiance is still a far cry from embracing Islamic practice. Although the specific barrier touched upon by the individual may require a specific response, it is well to keep in mind that the basic problem is identical in every case, and that is the problem of secularism. It is not specifically the "freedom" for women to dress skimpily in public, the fear that the financial establishment will fail without interest, or addiction to alcohol which truly prevents a commitment to an Islamic life-style. The true barrier is .secularism

Secularism is basically a social psychology that has probably been intentionally developed in the West. Its roots are in the dissatisfaction of the ruling elite in Europe in their failure to

increase wealth and of the religious elite in their failure to control the belief and practice of the populace. Contrary to the folklore, medieval kings in Europe were not fabulously wealthy nor was the church successful in eradicating heresy. The process of change includes many factors, such as the rise of the modern state and financial establishment as well as the Protestant Reformation. Protestantism still remains a crucial factor in fostering secularism, despite the overt conflict in aims. The function of secularism is and will continue to be the enhancement of a financial and religious elite.

In the long run, it would seem that secularism could best be overcome by engaging it in a dialectical relationship, whereby Islamic financial interests would become so overwhelming as to determine the character of international finance on one hand, and on the other, Islamic beliefs and practices might penetrate the religious establishment over a period of time to the extent of changing its character as well. Aside from the fact that the Muslim world has not pushed its advantage in either sector, such an approach would be self-defeating. Muslim history has clearly shown to what extent Islam is corruptible, and there is every likelihood that should Islam gain control of Rome Muslims in Rome would do as the Romans do. This is not to say that such strategies should be neglected. Rather the opposite is the case.

The financial and religious sectors in the West have manipulated the minds of the masses in their own interests,

creating a secular society with a common and unified religion, a society that through marketing consumerism maintains the highest possible increase of wealth for the elite. Any strategy for gaining control of the financial and religious dictatorship of the West must take the brain-washing of the masses into account. Victory over .secularism requires the reversal of that brain-washing process

The secular mind has been formed on a hierarchical democracy, in which there is competition to rise in the hierarchy without any change in the mind-set itself. The mind-set of secularism is quite simply that freedom and happiness are the most desirable things to be pursued in life, and they are attainable only by increasing the amount of leisure time at one's disposal and one's buying power. The failure to experience either freedom or happiness is explained on the premise that one has not yet achieved enough of either leisure or buying power. Justice is seen as a by-.product, which arises when there is a sufficiently high level of freedom and happiness

The Islamic approach seems to be very much the opposite. Justice is the most desirable thing to be pursued in life, and it is attainable to the degree that shari'ah or divine law is carried out in society. The failure to experience justice is explained on the premise that there has been at some point a failure in carrying out shari'ah. Freedom and happiness are seen to be by-products, which appear when there is a sufficiently .high level of justice

There are

three areas in which an individual can make a difference. The first is to act in favour of Islamic finances by encouraging Islamic banking and speaking out for the use of Muslim wealth to foster Islamic ideals. The second is to insinuate wherever possible Islamic beliefs and practices into Western institutions. The third is to meet secularized .individuals with the invitation to Islam

Some of the modes of secularism are mentioned below, but it must be remembered that others exist as well, and that all of them are basically the same thing, the product of mind manipulation which needs to be reversed. The reversal process entails the realization of the corresponding Islamic value and a strategy of activity to bridge over from the secular mentality to the Islamic one. The process thus uses the secular mode itself as an opportunity for presenting Islamic values. They are not listed in a logical order below, nor are they categorized. The reality is that most of them will .have to be met in every individual in the order in which they naturally arise

Modes of Secularism

Secular Mode

Bridging activity

Corresponding

Islamic Value

Loss of distinction between the sexes

.Right information on biology and Islamic law

Equality between the sexes

Interest

.Fostering of Islamic banking. Development of new strategies

Islamic banking

Commercial dress fashions

Discussion of principles of modesty and economy. Positive strategies such as self- or .hand-production of clothing

Islamic dress

Alcoholic beverages

.Information on the evils of alcohol. Development of a taste for alternative drinks

Non-fermented beverages

Non-Islamic Music

Information on the harmful effects of rock and popular music. Development of a taste

.for Qur'anic recitation and other aural arts

Islamic principles in regard to music

Non-Islamic art

Information on the connection between visual arts and criminal behaviour. .Development of a taste for calligraphy and other visual arts

Islamic principles in regard to art

Prejudices based on marketing consumerism

.Challenging advertisement thinking with rationality

Independent thinking and personal choice

Traditional fear of Islam

Right historical information on the influence of Islam. Direct contact with Muslims and .Muslim productions

Recognition of Islam as the primary civilizing influence in the world

Religious relativism as a cultural phenomenon

.Discussion of the principle of differences in values. Fostering the development of faith

Islam as the final and true revealed faith

In the matter of relations between the sexes, feelings run high against Islam. The general understanding is that Islam is backward, patriarchal, and suppresses women. The truth is that the conditions in some ostensibly Muslim countries to some extent confirm this prejudice. The first way of meeting this issue is to note that such conditions are the result of the ignorance and poor economy caused by colonial and neo-colonial policy. It is no use to cause trouble somewhere else in the world and then .lay all the blame on those who suffer from the trouble

The second thing to point out is that historically-speaking, Islam as a social movement began as a movement to improve the condition of women, who were oppressed by Judaism and Christianity, religions that are still far inferior to Islam in their laws relating to women. If the status of women has improved in some sectors in

the West in the last century or so, in areas such as inheritance and rights of ownership, this is largely the result of new ideas coming into Europe from Islamic civilization and fomenting through the Renascence and Enlightenment. So the second .thing is to get the history clear

The third point to get across is what Islamic law actually is, a system which recognizes the real biological differences between men and women on one hand, and attempts to equalize the unbalance in the best possible ways. This only works, however, when people adhere to Islamic law, rather than admiring Western ways of exploiting the .weaker

In the matter of interest or riba, Muslims have generally failed. They merely give in to Western banking malpractice. The matter of interest at this point can only serve as an area of discussion demonstrating the social and economic justice inherent in Islamic law. Little can be done by the individual but lament the fact that even where it is ostensibly put into practice, Islamic banking tends to conform to Western pressures. The fact that Islamic law does foster such social and economic justice, however, may .be attractive to some secular people

In the matter of dress, the secular person can be approached through the fact that fashion and design are important means of economic exploitation. This can be an .opening bridge for the introduction of Islamic principles of modesty

The evils of alcohol are so well known that a repetition of them is generally not very effective

p: ١٠٨

in reaching secular people who drink. Islamic principles of abstinence can form a point of contact with secular people who happen to oppose the use of alcoholic beverages. A point which is more rarely noted is that alcohol is one of the means of social control, and refusing to use it is a means of attaining individual independence. Secular people interested in personal freedom sometimes respond favourably to this argument.

Rock and popular music are also important means of thought control. Dissent in the West is generally disbursed and rendered innocuous through the use of rock or folk-rock music. The drug-like effect of rock and popular music is well-documented by Western scientists, and used quite knowledgeably by music producers. The consumer tends to deny it, however, and pretends to listen to music solely because of personal likes and tastes. This attitude is exactly the same as that of a heroine addict who claims to use heroine because he likes it. Music addiction is one of the greatest deterrents to the propagation of Islam. The only effective way of dealing with it is the repetition of the idea that music is an addiction. The secular person can break free of it only after having accepted that realization, one which is amply supported by a great deal of scientific research readily available.

As with music, Islamic principles vary. All Muslims reject rock and popular music, since these so obviously arouse excitement. Some Muslims reject music altogether. The argument is many centuries old, and can

hardly be settled here. In the same way, some Muslims reject all art except calligraphy and geometric design. Others accept inanimate portrayal, others animate portrayal of all except the human figure or the human face. Finally, at the liberal extreme there are those who basically reject only the portrayal of God and His prophets (as) and art with tendencies to arouse excitement through pornographic themes. This final stance is of course the easiest to get across to a secular person, .and appeal can be made to logic in this matter

The three final slots in the table refer to stages of prejudice in general, rather than to specifics. The first point that can make a secular person susceptible to Islam is to get across the realization that people in the world have become more and more dependent on prejudices created by advertizing than on their own thinking and personal choice. People tend to think they are making a personal choice in one or .another matter, but are in fact acting in function of marketing influence

A discussion of this phenomenon, when successful, opens the way for the secular person to think about Islam as a rational alternative, a choice which may affirm independent thinking. Secular people, although most generally the slaves of marketing, recognize the irrationality of Christianity. They project this on Islam. When they can be brought to understand that Islam differs essentially from Christianity precisely in the area of rationality, interest can be awakened. One way of emphasizing this

is by saying that Islam is not a religion, but a way of life. In rejecting Christianity, the secular person has rejected religion. They are open, however, to a way of life.

Secular people are generally plagued by irrational fears of Islam generated by the Crusades at the earliest point and transmitted through folklore, and confirmed by contemporary media. Between the two lie the so-called Reconquista, the Renascence, and the Ottoman invasion of eastern Europe. These historical factors still have ramifications in the modern psyche, and serve to complicate the attitude towards Islam. These irrational fears can be met in several ways. The first is correct information about history. The second is balancing information about Muslims today. The first can be attained by providing books and articles by Muslims authors. The second is best attained through peaceful, friendly, and direct contact with Muslims.

Religious relativism is generally seen as a tolerant trend. In fact, it is really a way in which secular people categorize all religious traditions as outmoded. They are cultural remnants that should only serve the purpose of museum objects and events interesting to tourists. This can be met by pointing out that religious traditions differ in the effectiveness of their principles of economic and social justice. Most secular people have an ostensible interest in these matters. Hedonism usually has a veneer or cloak, and by plucking at the sleeve of that cloak one may sometimes elicit a response. However, once one has made the point that Islam has better

answers to contemporary issues than other religions, including secular trends, there is still the gap of faith to be met. Islam is a revealed faith and requires belief in the revelation as revelation. We can do much to foster a receptive attitude in those around us, but only God can create faith. Da'wa is an invitation, and we are responsible for extending it in as attractive manner as possible, but it is not, like .missionizing, a form of compulsion

Post–secularism: New Age Spirituality .۲

Just as in Christianity, not everything in New Age spirituality is bad from an Islamic point of view. A number of practices and bits of information fostered in the New Age movement are consonant with not only Islam, but with just being a human being. .However, the central doctrines of the movement are inimical with Islam

The effect of religious relativism has been the proliferation of other types of spirituality than the Christian ones. Of course, bankrupt Christianity has left a spiritual void, and this has been filled by an interest in oriental religions, primitive religions, and pseudo-spiritualities based on them. All of the Western interests in these other spiritualities are based on secularism, that is, on the idea that personal well-being is the core of any spirituality. There has been a shift away from the traditional Christian concern with salvation or future well-being toward spirituality or present well-being. Given the morbidity of Christian soteriology or the doctrine of salvation, the trend was predictable. It has already been noted that the proliferation of

sects in Christianity almost never questioned Christian soteriology. It remained for the .New Age spirituality to do so

It should be clearly understood that New Age spirituality, or the morbid concern for health and well-being as a spiritual exercise and function, is the direct result of this misplaced concern in Christianity, namely the focus on salvation. As a reactionary trend in dialectical relationship with Christianity it is susceptible to all of the criticism that might be directed towards the original Christian doctrine. It is first of all morbid and self-centred. It is furthermore selfish and raises the individual out of his or her proper place in the family into a competitive position vis-a-vis society as a whole. New Age spirituality is merely the old Christianity couched in a more immediate form and more susceptible to marketing consumerism. All of the many sectarian movements of New Age thought, whether based on traditional Oriental religions, traditional primitive religions, or on something developed in the West, can be reduced to this one bare reality. They speak of individual health and well-being to a populace which, through .secularism, has grown tired of thinking about future salvation

The second common feature of New Age thought is the belief in reincarnation. It is clear that the doctrine of emanations, so often presented by the great names in Islamic philosophy, is susceptible to interpretations reminiscent of reincarnation, or the rebirth of the same soul in a new body. The New Age concept of reincarnation is rather developed on the

basis of Hindu karma. The word karma has come to have a somewhat fluid meaning, and the whole configuration of belief differs greatly from that of India. First of all, karma is taken as the law of cause and effect, which gives it a rational coating. Without any rational justification, however, and without any proof, karma is taken to .imply reincarnation

New Age thought specifically uses karma and reincarnation for several experiences. The first of these is in social relations. When people meet who either like each other or desire further contact for some motive, they use reincarnation as a justification, saying that they were associated in a former life. The second most common use of reincarnation is the attempt to explain behaviour and events in such a way as to relieve the individual of immediate responsibility. The event or behaviour is seen as the result of an action or a choice in a past life. The implication is that nothing can be done to change matters. The third most common use of reincarnation is the enhancement of a dull life with a colourful past. Those who believe in reincarnation in the West have always and invariably been more interesting, or at least more famous, .people ages ago than they are now

Reincarnation and karma are also reactions to the Christian doctrine of salvation. There is a reversal from future salvation to past salvation. The past salvation is precisely what might be expected from the secular mentality: salvation by being rich

and famous, and thus happy, in the past. The configuration is again susceptible to the same criticism as the original Christian doctrine, that is, an attempt to escape the responsibility of obeying divine law in the present. The West is curiously willing to believe that God has a desire to enslave them by giving advice on how to behave. Rarely does a Westerner come to the conclusion that God's law might have as its purpose the best possible way of living together as families in society, that is, the .greatest possible freedom and happiness for everyone

The Sources of Secularism and New Age Spirituality .۳

An understanding of the underlying development of secularism and new age spirituality can be helpful in meeting these phenomena. The historical development of Western mentality shows a clear progression with elements of stability and change. Once these elements have been identified, strategies for triggering change on the .foundation of the stable aspects of Western mentality can be envisioned

Western mentality has a basis of heathen polytheism. All of the European religious systems before the conquest by Christianity were founded on the concept of a pantheon of various gods and goddesses with different functions. These were seen to control the fate of humankind, but demanded worship and various types of sacrifice for propitiation and in order to induce them to act favourably towards human beings. The Nordic gods are still reflected in the names of the days of the week in all of the Nordic languages. The Romance languages preserve the names of the planets, also perceived

as gods and goddesses, in the names of the days of the week in the Romance languages. In Western languages people refer daily to the ancient European gods. This is more than a mere linguistic remnant. It is a single piece of evidence for a whole .configuration of pagan thought that forms the underlying layer of European mentality

Christianity was a small sect among many cults competing with each other in the Roman empire in the first centuries of the Christian era. But for a particular historical event, Christianity would have disappeared with hardly a trace. Christianity became the vehicle for the emperor Constantine's attempts to consolidate his power. He made Christianity the State religion, the purpose of which was to enhance imperial power. In so doing he changed the face and character of Christianity beyond recognition, so that today it has practically nothing to do with the actual teaching of Jesus (AS) and his original followers. There were two matters that needed to be reconciled: these were the stubborn religious traditions of the pagan population and the agenda of the imperial court. These two factors are the seedbeds of modern .secularism and new age spirituality

In the fourth and fifth centuries Christianity laid aside its original teachings and incorporated enough pagan tradition to satisfy the populace and enough imperial aspects to make it useful to the emperor. Polytheism entered Christianity in the form of the Trinity and in the form of saints, who were camouflaged lower deities. The popular Roman cults

of personal salvation contributed the idea of a blood sacrifice for sin. The monarchical concept of the church was a stroke of genius, as this above all provided a power hierarchy for imperial use. Thus the primitive Christian doctrines of the unique “fatherhood” of the one true God, forgiveness of sins by free divine grace to all who forgave those who sinned against them, and the total disestablishment of religion, .were replaced by teachings serving a completely different agenda

The doctrine of the Trinity and salvation by a human, blood sacrifice provided a means for the affirming of Church power and thus of imperial power. The Trinity satisfied the polytheistic demands of the populace. But its theological formulation was ingenious from the imperial point of view. Quite simply, anyone who can be led to believe that three and one are essentially the same thing, can be led to believe anything. Anyone who can be led to believe anything, can be controlled. As for the matter of salvation by blood sacrifice, the church became the sole vehicle of personal .salvation, without which the soul was eternally damned in hell

The “bloodless” sacrifice of the Eucharist was doled out by the priests to those who submitted to church and thus imperial authority. To the minds of the people, this bloodless sacrifice actually became the blood and body of the crucified Christ, through the magical machinations of the priestly liturgy. Upon taking part in this “cannibalistic” .feast, the individual received the grace of salvation

This essentially remains the Christian doctrine and practice today. Upon a foundation .of pagan polytheism we find a layer of superstitious magic and imperial control

Western civilization is replete with many other aspects with a similar origin and development. Baptism is a good example. It has multiple pagan origins. Being "washed in the blood of the lamb" refers to the Roman cult into which one was initiated by being placed under a grating over which an animal was slaughtered, allowing the blood to flow over the body of the person below. Similarly, the practice of sprinkling water on the heads of babies comes from the pagan practice of placing the child under a bull and having the bull's sperm fall on the head, supposedly giving the child the strength of the bull. In order for the populace to accept Christianity as the State religion, it was necessary to incorporate functional equivalents of such practices. Mothers insisted on them, and had the church not provided them, they would have been carried on outside the church. By accepting them, the church consolidated its power over the populace. Western Christianity contains the seeds of .secularism and pagan-based spirituality. They are inevitable

Specific Strategies for Meeting Western Mentality .۴

We have uncovered the underlying, basic features which have produced secularism and New Age mentality. These are a lower, primitive layer of polytheism, a second layer of Christianized superstition, and an upper layer of imperial control. Whatever the pretence of rationality and individual freedom, basically, the Westerner has a magical concept of the world

.and believes the must be controlled

The Muslim missionaries in the Balkans built on this foundation and the result was the only stable and permanent Muslim communities in Europe. Their strategy worked on the basis of superstition and military control. The Sufi practitioners used sleight of hand tricks to awe the superstitious Christian population and thus convinced them of the superiority of Islam by miracle-working. They reinforced this by military control. .These were the two things that Europeans could understand and they worked

On the other side of Europe Islam failed to preserve the flower of European civilization, Andalusia, because of its dependence on other means of presenting Islam. In Muslim Spain the emphasis was on reason and culture. There was no European Dark Age, merely because Paris and London were agricultural market villages. There were centres of civilization at the time, but all of them were in Muslim Spain. Reason and culture were ploughed under and the Christianization of Andalusia five hundred years ago turned the cultural and intellectual centre of Europe into a ghetto from .which it has never recovered

The conclusion is that the most effective way to reach Westerners remains trickery and miracle-working along with a show of power. These are the very methods presently used in the West. Marketing advertisement is an appeal to trickery that by-passes the reasoning processes. The threat of military power continues to be the only .way of controlling the Balkans even today

Obviously there is a self-defeating element in such an approach. There is

another aspect of history, and that is the fact that Medieval Islam contributed culture, science and philosophy to the West. These continue to have an influence, and if constantly applied have the potential of spreading Islamic values. The challenge is to maintain these elements of Islamic influence in one's contact with secular individuals .and, insofar as one can, to influence matters more broadly

These influences have continued for over a thousand years. Muslims may and can retrieve the pre-colonial values of Islamic civilization through education, the arts, and sciences. Globalized civilization is of such a low and superficial character that it is unable to compete with the vitality of what has been proven through centuries of success to be better. A bold penetration of the academic world on one hand, and the world of entertainment on the other, with Islamic education, science, and arts would be irresistible. The best strategy in dealing with secularized Westerners is to develop .these areas in one's personal life and aggressively share them

Mission or Invitation: Making it Work

point

The purpose of this lecture is to present and briefly evaluate the various kinds of missionary activity that has been used. I shall chiefly examine Christian and Islamic methods. Hopefully a summary of methods will give the individual extending the invitation to Islam a clear picture of the available alternatives, to what extent and under what circumstances they are effective, and whether or not they are generally .applicable in an Islamic context

Islam was historically spread by several means. The first was

the web of kinship ties. Later Islam was associated with trading ties. Military expansion also became a factor, although provision was made for non-Muslims to live under Islamic jurisdiction without reversion to Islam. For the most part, the principle .of no compulsion in religion has been implemented to varying degrees

Christian Missions: An Evaluation .۱

point

Christianity was first spread as a movement within Judaism. It opposed Jewish collaboration with Rome with a conservative programme recognizing the abiding character of divinely appointed leadership, namely in the figure of Jesus (as). Rome rightly saw this as a threat and forced it underground. It thus spread as an underground, illegal movement using networks such as kinship and trades. True Christianity continued underground when the visible Church became allied with the empire under Constantine. We must therefore differentiate between the propagation .of true Christianity and the Church, which are historically opposing institutions

True Christianity has always remained an underground movement known under various names, such as the Waldensians. Their method of propagation consisted of itinerant preachers who went about the countryside reciting the Bible by memory, generally in the local language, and hiding their identity under the cloak of peddling cloth, jewels, and other notions. At the time of the Reformation they were lured out of the woodwork and either were destroyed or capitulated to the established heresies, that is, the doctrines of the Trinity, the Atonement, and the Church. True Christianity .may still exist, but it is not known to

The Church was an arm of the State for the

purpose of controlling the population. It was spread through State patronage and military expansion. The Church established itself in Europe through the sword. Dialogue between religions existed, but was almost uniquely the effect of the political situation in Andalusia. Except where encouraged to dialogue by Muslims, the Church preferred force. Upon conquering Andalusia, the Church set up an extraordinary system of violence and force known as the Inquisition. By this means it terrorized the people it had forced to convert to Christianity and their descendants for many generations. It cannot be over-estimated to what extent the Church establishment .enjoys the use of terror

Colonial activity expanded the methods to parallel the ways in which colonial governments controlled indigenous populations. During this period the Church established the traditional missionary societies. Their methods were ١) translation of the Bible into local languages, publishing and distributing the Bible and tracts; ٢) establishing schools ostensibly for education but in fact to alienate indigenous peoples from their own cultures and kin and provide them with the capability of reading and using Church propaganda materials; and ٣) providing medical care in order to gain the trust of the indigenous population. This three-pronged approach opened the way for public preaching and the establishment of churches. The real motives for converting .to Christianity under colonial domination have largely been social and economic

In the post-colonial period the Church has participated in post-colonial policy, which is the maintenance of economic dependency and the introduction of a global market. The proliferation of

missionizing in the Church is within the wider framework of marketing advertising techniques. The Church has become a commodity serving the interests of neo-colonial policy. It is increasingly an aid agency. This is an extension of the social Gospel, which was the way in which the Church supported the proliferation of an oppressed labour population under industrialization. Church charity stabilizes the .power hierarchy and helps to prevent revolts

In Europe and America it has become a business like any other. This is seen throughout its structure and liturgy, but the clearest evidence of this is its use of advertising music styles that have replaced traditional forms of worship. Traditional worship is outmoded specifically because the Church is an entertainment commodity in competition with other forms of entertainment. It ought to be remembered that multi-media entertainment is a form of control, so that in fact the Church has not changed at heart since the time of Constantine despite its many masks. This then is .the context in which missionary activity by the Church needs to be seen

An examination of true Christian propagation at the present time cannot be done. It is not certain that any true Christians are left. They have either reverted to Islam long ago, or been destroyed by the Church. If there are any, they are propagating within kinship networks in secret. I mention this only because Islam may be reduced to that very case in some areas, and could profit by the knowledge that such a thing was

feasible for at least a thousand years of Christian history. The true Christians were exposed by the ruse of a pretense by the Protestants of making a break with Rome. When they exposed themselves, thinking to gain allies and support, they were either destroyed or forced to accept Roman doctrine. The lesson is to beware of unholy .alliances

The Church makes use of the following methods today. The list may not be .comprehensive, but is representative

.A. Publication of Scriptures and tracts

The publication of Scriptures and tracts has been seen to be most effective during the era before television. Radio did not seem to detract from it. Furthermore, the distribution of Scriptures is important. Religious publications have been most effective when distributed by individuals who do not distribute the material free of charge but take a price for it. Free material has a far lesser effect. In former times the vending of religious materials also provided a means of livelihood for those engaged in it, but this has been reduced by media competition and reliance on social welfare in some areas. Nevertheless, acquiring wholesale Islamic literature and selling it for a profit is a largely untapped alternative that might be used by some. At the same time, the selling .of the Qur'an for a profit is not considered Islamic

.B. Educational institutions and aid

Despite some criticism by proponents of the Church Growth Movement, educational institutions continue to contribute to the growth of the church and to maintaining a certain level of understand of the faith. In Islam, education has largely focused on

Muslims. It is doubtful whether providing Muslim education for non-Muslims is .anywhere a valid option. The activity relies on colonial and post-colonial dependency

.C. Medical institutions and aid

Medical institutions are supported by churches in post-colonial situations, which again rely on colonial dependency to be effective. Furthermore, medical practitioners often have Church literature in their waiting rooms. Finally, there has been at times a movement of folk medicine and simple remedies to propagate the Church. There may be areas of usefulness for all three of these methods. Medical institutions run by Muslims in impoverished countries could have an effect on the reversion of the population to Islam. Muslim doctors and dentists have an opportunity of supplying .their patients with Islamic literature, and this can be effective

Finally, alternative medicine can be a means of making contact with a clientele, for those few Muslims capable of engaging in some sort of alternative healing. Not all of these are compatible with Islam, but certainly Arabic remedies as well as other folk remedies are. Additionally, some of the New Age healing arts are not in conflict with .Islam and might present an avenue of activity

.D. Famine relief and other forms of charity

It is undeniable that many of the Church personnel engaged in relief and other forms of charity are truly charitable persons who care about the people they are helping. This is true even when they have the intention of conversion in mind. That intention is generally missing in the event of Muslim charity, largely because Muslim charity is equilateral, and there is rarely a feeling

of elitism or dependency. The context of charity is nearly always in the colonial or post-colonial situation, and does not provide the same avenues to the propagation of Islam as it does to the Church.

E. Direct market advertising of all types.

Radio, newspaper, magazines, billboards, television, and internet provide avenues of getting the message of Islam across. Although they are a part of the market-based society, they can be used in presenting Islam as well, as long as unethical features such as appeals to sexuality and violence as well as subliminal messages are avoided.

F. Public lectures.

Public lectures are not as prevalent or effective today as they have been in the past, and are no longer used to the same extent as formerly. However, they continue to be valuable means of getting information across. Public lectures do require preparation and funding, and for this reason are not always sufficiently productive to justify their expense.

A special adaptation of public lectures is the old-fashioned revival. This has its roots in the Methodist awakening and is not that old, going back only to the mid-۱۷۰۰s. This again had a special adaptation in America in the camp meeting. For the most part these means of propagating Christianity are considered outdated. The revival and campmeeting combined hymnsinging and preaching in such a way as to touch the emotions of the participants and convince them to make a commitment to Christian faith and the Church.

G. Entertainment worship in public.

Entertainment worship in the Christian context consists in sketches, plays, music, clowning, and other forms of entertainment, often included directly in the

worship event itself. These are conceived to be not only effective means of attracting the "unchurched," but also of retaining the interest of the youth. This form of activity is a possible resource in an Islamic context. Cultural and esthetic programs can be arranged to attract people. These might include traditional forms of art, drama, and music. In an Islamic milieu, however, it is not possible to bring them into the actual worship situation. The worship events of Ashura do provide avenues to attract the interest of non-Muslims.

H. Targeted entertainment worship

Especially popular music is used by the Church as a propagandist tool. Recordings can be used at home, while traveling, and in other situations. This is also an appropriate means of spreading Islam. The use of recordings, cds and cassettes, for the recitation of the Qur'an, du'a, and even other material of a more cultural significance is appropriate. Such materials can be sold or given to interested people. Although we cannot call the recitation of the Qur'an or some du'a entertainment, it can functionally replace popular entertainment. There is a growing industry in Muslim circles of mimicking Western popular music within an Islamic context. The addition of a rock beat to Sufi music for example, is one of the major ways Islam is being defeated. Modern Christianity is more a feeling than a belief. Such music introduces that feeling into a person directly, by-passing the rational process. This should be combated with the recitation of Qur'an and du'a material.

I. Political lobbying, political control, political coups, and terrorist acts

Christians will admit to using

only the first of these four methods, although it is clear that the others have a long history as well. Since there is no compulsion in Islam, political coups and terrorist acts should never be associated with Islam. They are essentially Roman in character, and thus have more to do with the Church than the mosque. It is appropriate for Muslims to use democratic means toward Islamic goals. Even political lobbying and block .voting might be used more effectively than they have been in the past

.J. Cafes and discos

In recent times Christians have used cafes and discos for evangelistic purposes, inviting people, especially young people, off the streets to enter a congenial environment and have religious discussions with other young people. There is a limited possibility of that kind of thing in urban areas where the Muslim population is high. A small group of young people could invite people on the street in early evening, when young people are moving about, and sit with them for discussion over tea. An agreement could be made with the Muslim owner of a café to allow them a table for making that kind of contact. Three young men working together might be able to .make an impression

K. Personal evangelism projects: training, one on one methods, partner methods, public .solicitation

Evangelical Christian churches are very active in missionizing seminar training programs with a continual development of methods, mostly based on marketing culture. Among the most long-standing of these are the following. The one-on-one method is for each individual to make a goal of converting one specific person, and concentrating on

contact with that one person until he achieves success or until it seems best to try another. Each one win won programs are often set up in churches to last over a season or even a year. The partner method is especially known among Jehovah's witnesses, who go from door to door in pairs. However, there are other groups doing this, some of them doing nothing else but this. Public solicitation or street witnessing is also popular in urban centers. All of these methods can be applied in an Islamic context. Research has shown, however, that they are not as effective in producing conversions as might be expected. Especially the two-by-two, door-to-door approach has been shown to be more effective in affirming the commitment of the missionaries themselves than in gaining converts. That does not mean that the partner approach .need be discarded

.L. Charismatic healing

Some Christian churches attract crowds of people who hope to be healed. The healing process takes place under continuous, highly charged emotional music, speaking in tongues (ecstatic, meaningless utterance), ecstatic behaviour such as dancing and falling on the floor. The excitement of the event draws a crowd always in the hope of seeing a miracle. Islam has also used such methods, specifically through Sufi groups approaching Western societies through the Ottoman expansion. It is effective with Westerners for some unknown reason, perhaps because of the aversion to reason so prevalent in Western religion. Some Muslims might consider to what extent Islamic healing practices might open avenues to make

fruitful contacts. A full-blown charismatic approach, however, would merely be a .capitulation to a popular trend in Christianity rather than the spread of Islam

.M. Church planting techniques, public marketing visibility, cell groups

For several decades much Christian missionizing has been influenced by the Church Growth Movement begun by Donald McGavrin and fostered by Fuller Seminary. The basic idea is to apply marketing strategy to church growth in a systematic way. Variations on this theme are many, but perhaps the most pervasive result of the movement is the establishment of cell groups. The congregation is divided into small groups living in the same area who meet in homes perhaps once a week for charismatic prayer, fellowship and possibly some Bible study. The results have been mixed. In some areas the growth has been phenomenal, in others dismal. The reason is the same as for the marketing of any product. Some of the features of marketing might be applied to Islam, but the basic philosophy behind it is not appropriate to .Islam

(N. Defamation of Islam, the Qur'an, and the Prophet (as

Defamation of Islam is done through publications, videos, and internet websites. It is equally possible to engage in the same activity in regard to Christianity. A good deal has been published showing that the Qur'an is false, and in the same vein that the Bible is false, both using essentially the same methods and arguments. The method appears to be a dead-end. There is a special danger in Islam for engaging in it. First of all, good manners are important to Islam and these tend to prevent such activity. ,Secondly

defamation of the Bible is a tricky subject. The Bible we have today is essentially the same as during the time of the Prophet (as). So whatever is said about it in the Qur'an is essentially true today. Criticism of the Bible has to be carefully evaluated in the light of the Qur'an. The same goes for relations to the followers of the Book. Given that, .negative approaches are doubly difficult

O. Interfaith dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is used by Christians at times as a means of converting Muslims to Christianity. This hidden agenda is not particularly successful, and is too expensive for the small returns. Interfaith dialogue is mainly useful in sharing direct and correct .information between faiths and diffusing hostility

P. Community cooperation

Christian churches, as they have become more and more separated from the State, have made use of other means of gaining a hold on society, and among these have been participation in nearly every kind of community project that exists, not just charities. This secular visibility of the Church has not generally produced returns in conversions, but has in a small way enhanced the profile of the Church among secularized people. If Islamic agencies copied this example, the returns would be the .same

.Q. Youth excursions and sport

Aside from the use of rock music, churches try to attract and keep the attention of young people through the use of non-religious activities. These include camping, scouting, sport clubs and other interest groups. These methods have been effective among Christians in keeping their young people in the Church. In some cases

they also attract other young people. However, they can be expensive, and they require a good deal of continued planning and effort. In an Islamic context, it appears that there would be great possibilities in creating and maintaining martial art groups that have a strongly Islamic character, that include du'a, Qur'anic recitation, and the concept of the practice of the martial art as a zikr and as a means of becoming a part of the army of the Mahdi (as). This does not require a great deal of funding, but it does .require intense commitment and high degree of skill

.R. Infiltration

A common means of reaching Muslims with Christianity is infiltration. Various types are used. One is sending people to Muslim countries to work in secular jobs, but with the mandate of actually trying to convert people to Christianity on the sly. Such people are trained specifically for the task, both in their own theology, in Islamic practice, and in methods of working in secret. Another method is pretending to convert to Islam, in order to gain influence over Muslims and undermine their beliefs and practices. A .good deal of both types of infiltration are presently going on, especially the former

From an Islamic (as well as Christian view) there is an obvious moral problem with these approaches, but for some the ends justify the means. Infiltration is not recommended for practical reasons as well, as it generally results in ugly situations. Muslims are generally too welcoming of converts. Those who revert

to Islam should expect people to question them intimately on their beliefs and practices. I know of a person claiming to be Muslim and actually working and teaching .in Islamic institutions, while still confessing belief in the Trinity

In sum, it should be said that, generally speaking, the adoption of Christian methods of missionizing, despite the fact that an enormous amount of research, funding, and effort have been invested in them, would be misguided. This is not to say that a few tips on reaching people cannot be gleaned from the mass. In general, however, the goals and means of Christianity are so intertwined as to prevent an application to Islam. We have little to learn from Christians. The main usefulness in knowing how Christians work is in diffusing their influence, not in propagating Islam. The best place .to find methods of da'wa (as opposed to missionizing) are in Islamic sources

۲. The Need for an Islamic Model of Da'wa

Islamic da'wa or invitation to Islam is inherently distinct from the ways in which the Church has been propagated. No force is acceptable in the propagation of Islam. It must be noted that there is a historical parallel in Islam to the historical development of true Christianity and by contrast the Church. The Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates correspond to the Church in relation to true Christianity, and actually persecuted .Islam

In modern times, however, the comparison breaks down. Islam is an agenda of personal loyalty to the divinely appointed authority on earth, primarily the prophet (as) and then his duly appointed

progeny, and the politico-religious system that naturally arises from such loyalty. It is propagated through one general means: the imitation of the prophet (as) and the twelve holy Imams (as). When it has been attached to a State, that State is always .conceived to be governed by the Imam, to whom all functionaries are accountable

Both Christianity and Islam have seen a legitimate role for military conquest as a means of propagation of the faith. This has been far more prevalent in Christianity than in Islam. Islam has been more widely spread through trade routes. Trade routes have also had a role to play in the spread of Christianity, so that it would be inaccurate .to say that Christianity is imitating Islam in its recent attachment to business methods

There is a weakness in relying on marketing process alone for the propagation of faith. First of all, such a dependency implies that the faith will become vulnerable to the fluctuations of the market. The survival of the faith will then be tied to the survival of the market. Marketing techniques may be useful, but they must be subsidiary. The Church is more fragile than Islam in this area, first because of its growing dependency on the market, and second because of its inherent susceptibility to the market .mentality as corporate, hierarchical institutions

The reliance of Islam on Medieval trade routes played a definite part in the post-medieval weakening of Islam. As formerly flourishing trade routes lost their importance, Islam lost its importance

along with them. This should be a warning to modern Muslims who consider that the faith must be marketed, budgeted, and administered in ways similar to other Western institutions. At the same time it should be a warning the Christians, who have so intimately tied their faith to Western and Western-advocating institutions, that they are likely to suffer even greater losses than did Islam at a time when the economic .institutions in the world make radical changes

Modern Islamic means of propagation are many. Satellite television and internet websites support Islamic publishing, educational institutions, and Islamic centers. Public debate has been used for a long time, and more recently videotapes make such events even more attractive. Most of these activities serve the Muslim community .itself rather than reaching others to a great extent

A Proposal for a Da'wa Model .۳

point

A simple, grassroots means of action is the best in the long term. Islam, with its simpler structure, is better able to make use of this than is the Church, which is cluttered with the necessity of clerical institutions. A search among Islamic traditions for a model to build upon reveals that the Persian rawza appears to have great possibilities. This is a tradition of women's groups meeting generally on Saturdays for a recitation relating to Imam Hussain (as), other speeches, refreshments and informal social events. The character of the tradition has changed with time, taking on different functions in different periods of Persian history, but always maintaining its cultural importance. Models for da'wa within an effective, sustainable, and

economical framework can be worked out on the basis of this tradition. More than one .model should be used, so that the tradition can apply to various needs

Informal circles can be formed and maintained at a modest level. These can be not only women's groups, but men's groups and youth groups. They can meet not only on Saturdays as in the rawza tradition, but rather at convenient weekly times. They should have a regular time for meeting, a specific program and goal, and regular members. Each member should try to invite non-muslims to come to the meetings, so that there are always visitors present. These visitors can observe the programme, ask questions, receive information and literature, and enjoy the informal social .gathering

How to organize a Da'wa group ۳.۱

۱ .Choose six to ten members living in the same area, and a host or hostess

۲ Fix a regular time and place for the meeting, generally the home of the host or .hostess, or other venue

۳ .Decide on a programme

۴ Set regulations as needed, such as limiting refreshments. It might be best to make a rule that the host or hostess must not provide anything other than tea. Otherwise, it .can become an inordinate burden on one person

A Model Programme for a Da'wa group ۳.۲

۱ Informal conversation and getting acquainted with the visitors (five to fifteen .(minutes

۲ Opening of the program by the host, hostess or someone appointed. They could say ".for example: "Now we are going to have our traditional recitation from the Qur'an

۳ Recitation of the Qur'an (Not more than ten minutes). This can

be done in Arabic and English, or just in English if there is no one present who can read the Qur’an in Arabic. In that case, it might be appropriate for the members of the group to consider improving their knowledge of Islam. This is the most delicate moment of the meeting, since it is the only formal one. Especially with some visitors it .must be kept very brief

An informal presentation. If any of the members have read material in the ۴
intervening time since the last session, they might be invited to spend a few minutes summarizing what they have read and giving their opinion of it. This both educates and informs on one hand, and stimulates the others to focus on improving themselves. Not more than ten minutes for each presentation and not more than three presentations should be had. Selections from this book itself would be most .useful for such purposes

Raising of issues for discussion. Especially if there are visitors, they may have ۵
questions they would like to bring up. Even if there are not scholars present, often people feel more comfortable asking questions in an informal forum anyway. Generally such questions can be handled quite well by any Muslim. If the questions are too difficult, this merely provides an opportunity for providing the visitor with reading material. The visitor can then be invited back to tell what s/he thinks of what s/he has read. Refreshments should be brought out during this time, tea by the

host or hostess and anything else that anyone might have brought along. The meeting should "degenerate" into an informal social gathering. Point five should be reached in under an hour, and people should feel free to start leaving within an hour .and a half

How to Invite People to a Da'wa Circle .۴

The purpose of the Da'wa Circle is to invite people to Islam through an informal social gathering. Even if no visitors are present, as may often happen, the meeting is still useful. It provides a social medium for Muslims to meet each other. It provides a stimulus for the study of the Qur'an and Islamic literature. It can help to improve every member's knowledge and practice of Islam. But finally, it is an open avenue for people to enter Islam. Therefore the atmosphere should be friendly and relaxed. Questions should not be answered in an aggressive or polemic way. Knowledge .should be shared, but so informally that it feels completely comfortable

In the same way, the invitation should be spontaneous and informal. People can be invited to a social get together without emphasizing its religious character. It is just a group of friends who get together once a week for tea and discussion. This means that any person a member comes in contact with is a potential visitor to the group. .They can be invited in a purely social sense

If the group begins to be so large that there are more than ten members regularly present as well as visitors, the group should be split into two groups

of six members each. The intention is that the groups will proliferate. If there are less than six members in a group, it may also become a burden. A meeting really must have at least three people present to be viable, and if the group has only four members, pressure for attendance will too great to keep the group going without effort. The goal of each group should be to grow and split. Care should be taken that as groups split Muslims of some experience are always taken along in each one. It is not advisable for a group to start with five or six people who have only embraced .Islam within the last month

Finally, each group should be ready to experiment with the programme to suit its own needs. Other things can be incorporated, and the points given above can be reduced in importance. There should always be at least a brief reading from the Qur'an, however, and the opportunity for people to ask questions in an informal setting. The secrets of keeping the matter going are ١) commitment of at least one person in the .group, and ٢) a format that is simple enough not to require preparation

Although it is perfectly appropriate to establish single-sex groups, the culturally determined separation of sexes in Muslim communities is not acceptable to non-Muslims. Such separation is associated with an appalling lack of civilization, especially on the part of secluded women. I have met scores of women who have been put

off Islam because they were relegated into a back room with women whose only interests were make-up and hair-dyeing. Women who were interested in discussing .religion, politics and economics would simply not put up with the affront

No matter what means of da'wa are chosen, the establishment of such informally organized groups is absolutely essential. Muslim communities are not capable of absorbing Western converts. Although Islam is singularly free of racism, Muslim communities are all the more corroded by national and cultural clashes. They are simply unable to assimilate outsiders to whatever cultural and national heritage is dominant in a particular mosque. Furthermore, it would be a betrayal of Islam for them to do so. Small groups for informal Islamic devotion can be foundations for establishing indigenous Muslim communities and can even function as permanent spiritual centers. Any Muslim who has the illusion that the presently existing national and cultural communities can serve the needs of the indigenous Muslim community is in store for a rude awakening. Englishmen and Americans might revert to Islam, but .they are not about to become second-class Pakistanis or Iranians

Da'wa according to the Holy Qur'an

point

Every Muslim has a policy, either conscious or unconscious, for dealing with non-Muslims, and specifically with those called people of the Book. But that behaviour usually takes the injunctions of the holy Qur'an into consideration in only a haphazard way. There are people who call themselves Muslims who feel that they are called upon merely to be polite in their dealings with Christians. They feel

no burden to inform others about Islam. Others consider that they have no responsibility since Allah leads everyone according to His will. There are even those who think that all religions are equally valid, and no one should make a change in his faith. Perhaps more sadly, even the well-intentioned and well-guided sometimes fall back on the notion that there is nothing to be done but try to promote Islam as a .beautiful faith in a positive light

Much contemplation of the invitation to Islam in this book focuses on types of spiritual profiles, the various ways of approaching other people, establishing goals, identifying the areas of false belief, and examining ways and means of making changes in those beliefs. But in the final analysis, it is not what has been proven effective that is important, but what the holy Qur'an has revealed and commanded that we should do .in relation to non-Muslims

The holy Qur'an deals with this issue in many passages using many different expressions. This means that the issue must be an important one. Otherwise the holy Qur'an would not approach it so often in so many ways. It is not the purpose here to examine all of them, although that should certainly be done. It is rather the purpose of this chapter merely to examine those few passages that refer to the people of the Book by that name, pointing out how such people should be dealt with in terms of their acceptance or rejection of the

.message of Allah

If we fail to do this, we are likely to fail in all of the investigation done so far. To ignore the council of the holy Qur'an in this matter cannot fail to lead us astray in the matter of meeting people with the message of Islam. What follows in this chapter is merely a beginning towards developing a Qur'anic philosophy of presenting Islam. It is high .time this is done

In the following study all of the passages of the Qur'an containing the expression "people of the Book" that seem to refer to da'wa are examined. A number of passages are neglected that support the arguments, but seem to give no particular new information relevant to the particular issue at hand. Finally, those passages containing the expression "people of the Book" but focus on issues other than da'wa .are obviously neglected as well

The Roots of Da'wa .۱

point

The first five points made by the holy Qur'an in relation to meeting people of the Book are fundamental and must be taken into consideration in every da'wa situation. We might want to call them the roots of da'wa. The ones that follow them are also basic, but more often relate to the specific problems of particular situations. These can be called the branches of da'wa, as they are generally speaking particular applications. All sixteen points should be memorized, practiced, and taken constantly into account .while dealing with people of the Book

Forgive and Overlook ۱.۱

(Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people

back to infidelity after you have believed, from selfish envy, after the Truth has become manifest unto them: But forgive and overlook, till Allah accomplish his purpose; for Allah has power over all things. Qur'an ۲:۱۰۹

I once patiently explained the Biblical evidence for the oneness of Allah to a young Christian. He failed to accept it. Rather, he tried to make me believe in the Trinity. I met him on a later occasion, went through even more detailed arguments, with the same result. On a third occasion I met the same young man. He again rejected my arguments, and put heavy emotional pressure on me to accept Jesus (as) as God .Almighty

At that point I made a mistake. I asked him if Jesus (as) had been circumcised. At first he did not want to answer, so I asked him to open his Bible to Luke ۲ and find out. He reluctantly admitted that Jesus (as) had been circumcised. I then asked him whether the piece that had been cut away had also been God or not. He looked at me reproachfully. I suppose I should be happy that he did not hit me. Much as I felt he had tried my patience, and much as my argument appeared reasonable and valid to me, .still it was not productive

The holy Qur'an, in its first passage telling us how to deal with the people of the Book, advises us to avoid problems of this sort. The ayat does not tell us

to avoid proclaiming the truth. Before we are to exercise forgiveness and overlook the Christian attempt to turn us from the right way, we must be sure that the truth has become evident to them. This is the heart of the ayat. The truth must become evident to the Christian. My presentation of the truth, even from the Christian Scriptures, may .well be evident to me

But it may not immediately be evident to the Christian to whom I am speaking. Therefore, I must wait "until Allah accomplish his purpose." During that waiting time I must continue to find ways of making truth evident to the Christian, while at the same .time forgiving and overlooking his attempts to take me off the right path

The attempt of the person of Christian background to take me off the right path may well be other than doctrinal. It may be something less obvious than the Trinity. The "selfish envy" that motivates such behaviour may well focus on behaviour. The argument may be implicit that, living in a non-Muslim country, I have the duty to conform for the sake of peace. Perhaps I should dress in a different way, or eat in a .different way in order to avoid trouble

I once came into conflict with the officials of a certain Western country where I was living because of the Islamic behaviour of my daughter in school. One of them informed me that if I wished to live in the country, I had to conform

to the conditions ruling there. My appeal to the fact that the country had laws granting religious freedom was actually met with the argument that such freedom referred to the religious majority. The Qur’anic injunction in such cases is ۱) to make the Islamic position as clear as possible, and ۲) to be forgiving and overlook in insult until such .time as “Allah accomplishes his purpose

Expect Resistance ۱.۲

Even if you were to bring to the people of the Book all the Signs (together), they would not follow your Qibla; nor are you going to follow their Qibla; nor indeed will they follow each other's Qibla. If you after the knowledge has reached you, were you to follow their (vain) desires, --then indeed you would be (clearly) in the wrong. Qur’an ۲:۱۴۵

The second Qur’anic principle is to expect resistance of the truth. The passage states first that all the evidence should be presented. But it goes on to stress that even after all of the evidence is presented, the Christian is likely to reject it. The wording of the Qur’an does not suggest that we are not to present the evidence. It does imply, however, that presenting the evidence is enough. It discharges us of our duty. We are not to use compulsion to getting the evidence across, whether that compulsion be physical or more insidious, such as the use of immoral means the likes of which are increasingly popular in marketing and missionizing. A dignified and clear presentation of the facts and

.reasons is enough

An interesting psychological principle is developed here. It is popular in Western thought to emphasize the power of positive thinking. The Qur'an, on the contrary, notes the importance of negative thinking. We should expect a rejection of the message. Why is this? The Qur'an gives a good reason. If we expect the Christian to accept the message, and we repeatedly meet disappointment, we stand to become discouraged and in time actually be tempted to give up our own hold on truth and .right guidance. If we expect rejection, we are completely protected from that danger

There is an interesting implication here, one not stated in the sacred text. That is the danger that we might feel that we are doing the guiding, through our implementation of positive thinking. The expectation of rejection lays the full burden of guidance on Allah, where it belongs, and thence the credit and responsibility. Being relieved of expectations, we are freed to focus on our own part, which is the clear and dignified expression of the message, unsullied by any ulterior motives on our part. In this way we see that the Qur'an is far superior to modern psychology. The Qur'an is not merely .a reflection of the latest scientific discoveries, it is rather a correction of them

The very next passage in the Qur'an gives an explanation of this behaviour. Why do people reject the clear evidence? The reason is that they know it already, but have taken on the habit of concealing the

truth. When you present material in support of Islam from the Christian Scriptures, you will generally meet denial because they are accustomed to concealing the true .meaning of the text

The people of the Book know this as they know their own sons; but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know. Qur'an ۲:۱۴۶

The process by which this is done is quite complex. The first means of concealing the truth is through biased establishing of the Biblical text. The second means is the biased translation of the Biblical text. The third means is the publication of the text in translation without the original parallel. The fourth means is through biased interpretation of the text, the biased selection of passages, and the purposeful neglect of scriptural witnesses to truth. All four of these means are in common use by .both Christian scholars and clergy as well as lay people

.Rely on Divine Guidance ۱.۳

Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace guided the Believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guides whom He will to a path that is straight. Qur'an ۲:۲۱۳

This Qur'anic passage gives an enormous amount of information. First of all, it maintains the unity of the original

revelation. That is, the Qur’an supports the diffusionist theory of W. Schmidt and Andrew Lang, the early ٢٠th-century anthropologists who maintained that humankind was originally monotheist, and that all religious traditions are deviations from that .original faith

Secondly, the Qur’anic passage maintains that messengers or prophets came with both good news and warnings in order to maintain that original faith. In that context God sent the Book (that is, the pre-qur’anic revelation), which had the role of judging between people when they came into disagreement. That is, the revelation was to .prevent the deviations from original monotheism

Thirdly, despite the witness of the Book or revelation, the people of the Book ”.deviated, not because the Book was unclear, but through “selfish contumacy

The fourth clause gives God’s response to human deviation from original monotheism. The Qur’an calls this guidance. It is not certain whether this refers to the pre-qur’anic Scriptures, since Scripture is also guidance, or whether this refers to the final revelation, the holy Qur’an, or to the Imamate, which is also guidance, or even to two or all of these factors. In any case, the Qur’an emphasizes that those who have .deviated have access to guidance

Finally, the last clause points out that God guides whom He will. Since the ayat has already stated that such guidance has already come to deviators, “whom He will” does not imply that God guides some people, that is, those few or many that He chooses to guide, but that the general grace of guidance granted

.to all, even to the deviators, is willed by God

The implication for da'wa is the realization that guidance is divinely willed and granted even to deviators. We do not therefore have the right to deprive deviators of divine guidance, whether it be the truth revealed in their own Scriptures, the Qur'an, or through the Imamate. Guidance is the will of God and is open to all. It becomes .inaccessible to deviators only by their own choice to ignore it

This implication has two aspects in reference to the Muslim engaged in da'wa. The first is the realization that his hearer has the right, by divine decree, to access to the guidance contained in revelation. The person engaged in da'wa must not deprive him of it by concession, conciliation, apathy, or any other means. The second aspect is that the content of da'wa must be precisely that of revelation. The one doing da'wa does not have the right to give other than divine guidance. He does not have to right to give .information that is not true, that is innovative or merely cultural in content

.Deal with Dispute by Submission to God ۱.۴

The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will): Nor did the People of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them. But if any deny the Signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account. (۲۰) So if they dispute with thee, Say: "I have submitted my whole self to Allah and so have those who

follow me." And say to the People of the Book and to those who are unlearned: "Do ye (also) submit yourselves?" If they do, they are in right guidance, but if they turn back, thy duty is to convey the Message; and in Allah's sight are (all) His servants. Qur'an ۳:۱۹, ۲۰

This passage is addressed to the holy Prophet (as). But its message refers to the person engaged in da'wa as well. The best form of da'wa is to follow the sunnah of the Prophet (as), and the sunnah of the Prophet (as) is contained in the instructions .God has given him in the holy Qur'an

The Qur'an points out that Christian deviation is not based on reason but "envy," that is, on an emotional response. Disputation may sound reasoned, but it is best to bear in mind that the Christian argument is always based on an emotional response, and is therefore itself susceptible to manipulation and political misuse. Therefore, it is best not to take the bait. If the discussion turns on a point of reason, the role of reason in Islam will lead the Muslim to focus on that issue in a reasoned way. The Christian will appeal to reason only in support of an already established emotional response. This is why disputation between Muslim and Christian is so often fruitless. It is not, as many Muslims so charitably think, because direct and reasoned discussion of principles goes against the grain when one is challenged to

.change one's position

The Qur'an gives here the proper road to take when brought to an impasse through Christian appeal to emotions camouflaged by logical disputation. It also gives the reason why this is important. In discussion with Christians, the Muslim challenge generally inspires the Christian to make blasphemous statement, statements that actually call for punishment. In doing da'wa, one has to be careful not to cause more harm than good. In such a case, the Muslim should express his or her desire to submit to the will and teaching of God. That submission should be whole-hearted and so sincere that the Christian is impressed to follow suite. Before allowing the Christian to get to the place in his argument that becomes blasphemous and calls down .punishment upon him, he should be led if possible to submit to God

This means that the person doing da'wa should think first about both submitting to Allah him or herself, and about encouraging the Christian to do the same. There is basically nothing in the Christian psychology to prevent this. If the Christian hesitates, one can ask "Is there anything in your religion that prevents you from submitting to God?" The answer should be no. Then it is possible to open common ground by saying "Let us both agree then that we will wholly submit ourselves to God." It is difficult for the Christian to refuse, and this has not only created common ground, but has brought the Christian a long step towards Islam, which

is merely submission to God. In further contact, if there is an area of dispute, a .reminder of this common commitment can restore understanding

There is another important factor in consciously going through this process. Muslims often approach those interested in Islam with a teacher mentality. Although it is true that if one's native language is Arabic, one will always have an advantage over others in that matter, it does not follow that one is thereby the definitive teacher of all others through time and infinity. One needs to relinquish arrogance if one expects to have a good reception, and the only way of relinquishing arrogance effectively is through .personal submission to God

The fourth rule is to say to Christians or others "Let us agree to submit ourselves ".entirely to God Almighty and to Him alone

.Define Submission to God ۱.۵

Say: "O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)." Qur'an ۳:۶۴

After establishing common ground by starting with the attitude of submission to God on the part of both sides, the next step can be taken. It is important to notice that this is the proper psychological order. First establish that we both submit ourselves wholly .to God. Then, and only then, define submission

The definition

of submission in this passage includes three points. The first is the oneness of Allah. The realization of the oneness of Allah is predicated on the attitude of submission rather than on a rational, deductive demonstration of divine unity or even on a revealed proclamation. This is the import of the phrase "La ilaha illallaah" which implies that there is none who deserves our worship or submission but the one Allah. The Christian should be led to understand that the submission to God, which he has already expressed, implies that there is only one God to whom he is submitting. But in many cases if will not be possible to present evidence other than an explanation of what Islam teaches. Pressure to cede the point is not effective. Proclamation of the .truth with its evidence is all we can do

The Qur'anic idea is very logical. It basically means that since we submit wholly to God, that God cannot exist in parts. Otherwise, our submission must also exist in parts. We should have to submit to one part of God with one aspect of our being or experience, and to another with another aspect of our being or experience. But this is clearly not our experience as we submit ourselves wholly to God. God is therefore one .and indivisible

The second point in the definition of submission to the one true God is that we do not associate partners with Him. It is one's personal submission that forms the basic argument for

the oneness of God, rather that recourse to reason or revelation. Again, pressure is ineffective. Rather, we should concentrate on making it absolutely clear that we are so concerned about submitting to God alone, that we dare not concede the status of deity to anything or anyone appearing in created form. The distinction between Creator and created is absolute, and our submission to the Creator alone is an act of recognition of His sovereignty.

Insofar as Christians go, the point in that Jesus (as) is not God Almighty. With other people, it might be Krishna whom we cannot admit to be the deity. For both, the argument will arise that Jesus or Krishna are not associated to God, but are manifestations, incarnations, hypostases of the one God. The rational argument must concede that a manifestation, incarnation or hypostasis, being in the form of a creation, is in itself an association. It cannot but mitigate both the unicity of God and His uniqueness as Creator.

The third aspect of defining submission is the rejection of human religious authorities that have been set up by human means. The only acceptable authority is that set up by God Himself. People have direct access to God without the intermediary of ecclesiastical authority, church or priest. It should not be difficult to see that full submission to God conflicts with recognition of such authorities. It is quite clear and logical. That does not mean that it will be acceptable to all to whom it is presented.

The Qur'anic

advice is a logical and psychological chain. It begins with submission to God. That submission implies that the God to whom we are wholly submitted is one and not many, one and not existing in parts. It further implies that no other being can be conceived as God, but the one God to whom we are wholly submitted. Finally, the third implication is that submission to that one God excludes submission to humanly established religious authorities. Thus, once we have innocently led the Christian to submit himself wholly to God, something he will generally be ready to do so as not to be less than the Muslim, we have in one fell swoop undercut the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the atonement (the sacrifice of the god-man associated with God), and the doctrine of the Church. In other words, we have weakened all three .major Christian heresies

This approach is workable with Christians and secular people as well. At this point a decision may be made, either for or against Islam. However, in making a decision against Islam, the individual will fall back on his traditions, whether secular or .religious. The following Qur'anic advice touches on those traditions

The fifth rule is to define our submission by saying "We worship God alone, we associate no one or nothing with Him, and we set up no human authorities from ".among ourselves

The Branches of Da'wa .۲

point

The basic principles of da'wa are given above. All five of them are essential to every da'wa situation. But they may

be, in fact must be, applied in practice in ways appropriate to the particular situation. The “branches of da’wa” described below give directions in how to deal with the specific and varied kinds of situations that commonly arise. Amazingly, the situations described in terms of the people of the Book in the Qur’an over fourteen centuries .ago are very much the same today

.Look to Abrahamic Revelation ۲.۱

Ye People of the Book! Why dispute ye about Abraham, when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have ye no understanding? Qur’an ۳:۶۵

Rather than accept Islam on the basis of the five-point plan noted above, many individuals will raise arguments for not doing so. This passage in the Qur’an describes a particular situation. The message of Islam specifically attacks the deviations of Christians and Jews with the appeal to return to the purity of the Abrahamic faith. This is a very psychological approach, since it appeals to what is common, or claimed to be common, in both faiths. The goal of the Islamic proclamation was to unite Jews and Christians in such a way that neither should exist any longer as such, but should go .forward united in the original monotheism, the faith of Abraham

In answer to this, Jews appealed to the Law (the books of Moses a.s.) and the Christians to the Gospel, in their attempt to validate their deviation. Both attack the Qur’an in various ways, but the most insidious way they do so is to consider the Qur’an the book

of Islam, as the Tawrat or Torah is the book of Jews and the Gospel or New Testament is the book of Christians. In that way the three faiths are set up as opposing but having in some sense equal validity. Muslims often buy into this by accepting Judaism and Christianity as divinely revealed faiths which are merely .superceded by the later revelation of Islam. This is not correct nor is it Qur'anic

The real situation is that there is only one valid faith, original monotheism. At the time of their revelation, the messages of Moses and Jesus (a.s.) were expressions of that one, true, original faith. They later became Judaism and Christianity through deviation, at which point they ceased to be valid faiths. The Qur'an does not accept appeal to divine revelation on the part of deviators as a valid justification for their deviation. We are not to accept their claims that the Torah or the New Testament .validates deviant traditions

The message of Islam remains an appeal to jive up deviation and to return to the faith of Abraham. It is not a message to accept the Qur'an as the book of Islam and out of courtesy allow that the Torah teaches Judaism and the New Testament Christianity. It is a logical implication that a single God without parts and without associates will reveal a single true faith. Alternatives are just not acceptable, politically correct as such an attitude may be in present society. To the extent that the Torah

.and the Gospel have been transmitted to us faithfully, they teach Islam

The surface import of the Qur’anic passage is that the basics of true faith are to be found already in the revelation to Abraham, and appeal to later revelation in an attempt to overturn that faith in support of deviation from it is unacceptable. The Qur’an essentially rejects the two alternative religious philosophies. The first is that God has given revelation in stages, so that there are basic truths that were unknown at one time, and became known through revelation at later periods. The second is that faith has gone through a process of evolution, developing from a primitive form .to a higher form

So this passage in the Qur’an warns us to avoid two issues that opponents will raise. The first is the battle of the books, and the second is development in faith from primitive to higher. Both of these are diffused by maintaining the principle of universal original revelation of monotheism and the understanding that the proliferation of .faiths is degeneration or deviation from it

When we are faced with these issues, appeal to the Bible to support deviation, the ”.correct answer is to say “Let us return to the faith of Abraham

.Watch out for Deceit ۲.۲

It is the wish of a section of the People of the Book to lead you astray. But they shall lead astray (not you), but themselves, and they do not perceive! ۷۰ You People of the Book! Why do you reject the Signs of Allah, of

which you are (yourselves) witnesses? ٧١ You People of the Book! Why do you clothe Truth with falsehood, and conceal the Truth, while you have knowledge? ٧٢ Section ٨.A section of the People of the Book say: "Believe in the morning what is revealed to the Believers, but reject it at the end of the day; perchance they may (themselves) turn back;"... ٧٥ Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless you constantly stand demanding, because they say, "There is no call on us (to keep faith) with these ignorant (Pagans)." But they tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it. Qur'an ٣:٦٩-٧٥

This passage gives a different excuse that people use for their rejection of Islam. The passage begins by noting the tendency of people who reject the faith to try to lead others astray. This is basically the appearance of deceit or dishonesty. The first point of dishonesty noted in ayat ٧٠ is that of claiming to submit to God, and then refusing to accept the implications. The second mode of deceit is concealing the Truth, especially the fact that the Law and the Gospel, whatever they claim to be following, actually .teach Islam

The third mode of deceit is pretending to accept the message of Islam in the hope of being able thereby to influence Muslims. It

is very common, especially in some quarters, to go along with what a person is saying, pretending to accept it, and later denying it. Many times Muslims think a person is close to Islam when he is merely being friendly. The final form of deceit is the idea that one need be honest only with someone who shares one's faith. The Qur'an does .not accept such behaviour

The Qur'an thus sets up these basic principles of honesty when dealing with the people of the Book. ۱) The need to recognize and follow through consistently on the implications of what one has proposed. ۲) The need to relate to Scriptures as an expression of divine truth rather than as a source of material to select what seems to support already accepted beliefs. ۳) The need for sincerity in one's expressions of belief. ۴) The need for treating all people with the same honesty, whether or not they .share one's faith

The principles of honesty needed in da'wa activity

Apply one's beliefs consistently in behaviour .۱

Use Scripture to find truth rather than to support what one already believes .۲

Express one's true beliefs honestly and accurately .۳

Treat all people honestly without regard to differences in faith .۴

.Remember that God Sees and Knows ۲.۳

Say: "O People of the Book! Why do you reject the Signs of Allah, when Allah is Himself witness to all you do?" Say: "O you People of the Book! Why do you obstruct those who believe, from the Path of Allah, seeking to make it crooked, while you were

yourselves witnesses (to Allah's Covenant)? But Allah is not unmindful of all that you do." Qur'an ۳:۹۸-۹۹

The Qur'an gives us here the proper response when people reject Islam. The context of their rejection is that they have agreed with us to submit themselves wholly to God. Yet they have failed to follow through on the implications of submission to God, that is, that for reasons of consistency they must relinquish belief in the Trinity, the Atonement, and the Church.

Although we might feel some sympathy for the inability to make changes in belief, knowing how difficult this may be, still rejection of Islam demands a firm response. This passage gives one. We are to remind them that God is a witness to what they do. If they have made a covenant with us that we will both submit ourselves wholly to God alone, then God is a witness to that. He sees and knows how we follow through on that promise. If we balk at obedience the first time it runs against our preconceived ideas, it ought to make us stop and think about our sincerity in making the promise in the first place. The Qur'an gives us the proper words for this response.

۲.۴ Remember that God Judges.

O ye People of the Book! Believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was (already) with you, before We change the face and fame of some (of you) beyond all recognition, and turn them hindwards, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath breakers, for

the decision of Allah must be carried out. Qur'an ۴:۴۷

This passage notes that the Qur'an confirms the Bible, what has already been sent. This does not mean that the Qur'an endorses everything in the Bible or that it confirms it to be without error. Many scholars have shown that the Bible has not been transmitted perfectly. But this passage notes that the Qur'an confirms the message .of the earlier revelation

This is a reference to the fact that there is one original and true revealed faith, that universal monotheism from which all religious traditions but the true one have deviated. The Qur'an is not an additional message, but a perfect expression of the original one that is still to be found, however imperfectly, in the earlier revelations even as they are transmitted to us. The Qur'an thus makes two points: firstly, people should believe the Qur'an; and secondly, that the Qur'an expresses the same .unchanging original faith that was revealed earlier

There is a reference here to the event described in Qur'an ۲:۶۵,۶۶. Those who exceeded in the Sabbath were turned into despised apes. Tradition notes that this took place in Aqaba or Biblical Elath on the sea. The people tried to find ways of circumventing the command to observe the Sabbath by not catching and eating fish on that day. Ingenious ways of circumventing divine law resulted in them becoming apes, without spiritual discernment. So people who make excuses for not carrying out God's commandment by the very process of

doing so dull their minds and their capacity to understand truth. So there is an .inevitable result of such action, besides the punishment of God for it

If the reminder that God sees and knows does not work, then we may make the appeal stronger by reminding them that judgment inevitably falls on those who make excuses for not following the truth that God has been graciously pleased to grant them. There is no compulsion in Islam, and one must be careful in dealing with such issues. Advertising and marketing can be forms of compulsion. This we are given specific limits in the Qur'an as to what and how much pressure can be put on people. We are allowed to remind people that God sees and knows everything. If that has no effect, then we are allowed to remind them of judgment. It goes without saying that each person should first examine him or herself in these matters. Hypocrisy is a .strong detriment to da'wa

.It is certain that all must one day acknowledge the Truth

And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Judgement he will be a witness against them; -- Qur'an ۴:۱۵۹

.Warn against the Trinity ۲.۵

O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a

Spirit proceeding from Him: So believe in Allah and His apostles. Say not "Trinity": desist: It will be better for you: For Allah is One God: Glory be to Him: (Far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs. Qur'an ۴:۱۷۱

There is a temptation to begin discussion with a non-Muslim on the matter of tawheed or the oneness of Allah. That is because this principle is the foundational doctrine of Islam on one hand, and one of the areas of most glaring error in other faiths on the other hand. Nevertheless, in this Qur'anic ordering of subjects to deal with as one meets the people of the Book, it comes only tenth. Experience shows that truly immediate approaches to this problem are not generally effective. Again, the .Qur'an is most psychologically astute in its ordering of subjects

This passage gives the basic points that need to be brought forward in discussion with people of the Book on this matter. Four basic issues are stated, two negative ones .and two positive ones

The first issue is to ask the people of the Book not to commit excesses, but to say only the truth about Allah. Committing excess refers not merely to the belief itself in the Trinity, but the pretension that such a doctrine is taught by the Christian Scriptures. The situation is not that there are two alternative beliefs that may be chosen

equally one over the other. The Trinity is an unwarranted attempt to define God, .which is to break the command in the Decalogue against making images of God

The attitude of defining God is to set the human capacity for theological cogitation above God. It is the attitude of the idolater, who considers that he has the right to make an image through which to worship God. Intellectual and physical images have their sources in this excessive attitude. The oneness of God is not the product of a theological formulation, but the submission to the divine proclamation of oneness. It is based on the attitude of submission and the realization that the human mind is incapable of grasping God. The implication is that nothing should be said about God in excess, that is, no expression should be maintained as categorically true in reference to God except those actually found in the sources of revelation. For example, since the Christian sources of revelation do not contain the term Trinity, it is excess to call .God a Trinity

The second issue is the right understanding of Jesus (a.s.). Christians commit an excess in calling Jesus (a.s.) God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. The Qur'an corrects this by pointing out exactly what and who he is. The important points are ۱) that he is the Messiah (a matter denied by the Jews at the time of Muhammad and later), ۲) that he is the son of Mary (with the implication of

the virgin birth, otherwise he would be called by the name of his father), ۳) that he was a prophet or messenger sent from Allah, ۴) that he is the word of God, that is, the divinely appointed expression of God's will, or the divine proof, on earth, ۵) and that he was a spirit proceeding from God. Thus the role of Jesus being a special representative of God on earth is emphasized, although this is not to deny that role to .others sent from God as well

It is important to emphasize all of these Qur'anic points, rather than just the fact that he was a prophet and born of a virgin. Believers in the Trinity are already sensitive to the fact that Islam teaches that Jesus (a.s.) was a man and not God. Therefore every possible opportunity to note the true greatness that the Qur'an accords to Jesus (a.s.) .should be taken

The third issue is to ask Christians to stop referring to God as the Trinity. Again the Qur'an mentions a very simple and obvious thing, but one that is easily overlooked. In the light of the fact that the Christian Scriptures do not mention the Trinity and to do so is therefore excess, and in the light of the fact that Jesus (a.s.) is the Messiah, son of Mary, a prophet, the Word of God, and a Spirit proceeding from Him, people should .therefore stop calling God a Trinity. It is appropriate to remind them to do so

The

final point to be made is to emphasize the foregoing by proclaiming the important points in reference to Allah. Again, this is a very effective psychological way of dealing with the issue. The first three points prepare the way for this one, making it clear and unequivocal. The first point to say about Allah is that He is one. The second thing is to break the intensity of the rationality through praise. This is absolutely necessary in order to reach the minds of the people of the Book. Thus, after saying that God is one, .we should say subhan Allah, praise be to Allah

This is in fact an acknowledgement of our status as creatures and His status as Creator. We need to put ourselves, both Muslims and Christians in our places as in the same category, creatures standing before our Creator. This prepares us for the third point, that the Creator is exalted above creation in essence. Creatures reproduce. By contrast, the Creator does not. The realization of the oneness of God, and His status as deserving of praise because He is Creator of all things, prepares one for the realization that He does not reproduce. The realization that He does not reproduce can and should produce the awareness that to ascribe a son to Him is an excess. The fourth point reinforces the uniqueness of God, who has neither son nor daughter, by giving the explanation that He is sovereign over all things in heaven and earth. Therefore

He can have no need to reproduce, and by extension can have neither need nor .possibility to be described in terms of being or having a son

Ask to avoid excess ۱

Not to believe in the Trinity ۱

Not to pretend Scripture teaches the Trinity ۲

(.Describe the true nature of Jesus (a.s ۲

The Messiah ۱

The son of Mary ۲

A Prophet ۳

The Word of Allah ۴

A Spirit proceeding from Allah ۵

Ask to desist from calling God a Trinity ۳

!Do not say Trinity

Give the major points on the oneness of God ۴

Allah is one God ۱

Acknowledge God as Creator through praise ۲

God has no son ۳

God is sovereign over all things ۴

The matter of excess in religion is often reiterated in the holy Qur'an, and could form the basis of a study in its own right. Qur'an ۵:۸۰ Say: "O People of the Book! Exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond the truth, nor

follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by, --who misled .many, and strayed (themselves) from the even way

.Take Advantage of What is Common Heritage ۲.۶

This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time, --when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret

intrigues. If any one rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good. Qur'an ۵:۶

This passage of the Qur'an relating to the people of the Book emphasizes that there are common issues between them and Muslims. There is a popular interpretation of this passage that says to eat with a Jew and sleep with a Christian. This is a false understanding of the revelation. In reality, neither Jews nor Christians eat in the proper way. Jews go beyond their Scriptures in prohibiting the eating of milk and meat together. Christians fail to follow the restrictions on diet altogether. What is of value here is to realize that the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians actually support Islamic diet as shown in Leviticus ۱۱ and Deuteronomy ۱۴, where the same species are prohibited and allowed as in Islamic law, with the exception of the camel, which is clearly given as a grace to the desert-dweller in the Qur'an.

The usefulness of this is to show to the Jew and Christian that Islam is teaching something that they lack in practice, but which they have in common with Islam through their Scriptures. Many will be surprised to see that their own Scriptures actually teach Islam, and this surprise will result in a favorable attitude towards Islam. This is only an illustration of the principle, since much of Islam, even in the smallest detail, is to be found

.expressed in the Scriptures of the people of the Book

The second matter, that of marriage to people of the Book, is of a different character. Here the emphasis on what is common heritage is not in terms of revelation, but social contact. Many religious communities become enclosed upon themselves. Muslims also have the concept of the Ummah or the community of faith. However, it is a community that is open to social contact. It is crucial that Muslims be willing to be in close social contact with those of other faiths, in order to present Islam to them in the best possible light. This extends even to the point of marriage. Suspicion is often attached to people who revert to Islam to marry a Muslim, but this is a Qur'anic practice. Da'wa by marriage is a laudable act. It often results in new Muslims who are more attached to the faith than the original Muslim spouse. Of course, it also happens that true faith does not materialize. For this reason care should be taken to provide a .good grounding in Islam before engaging in such marriage

.Show how the Qur'an Explains the Bible Correctly ۲.۷

O People of the Book! There hath come to you our Apostle, revealing to you much that ye used to hide in the Book, and passing over much (that is now unnecessary):... Qur'an ۵:۱۶

O People of the Book! Now hath come unto you, making (things) clear unto you, our Apostle, after the break in (the series of) our apostles, lest ye should say: "There

came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner (from evil)": But now hath come unto you a bringer of glad tidings and a warner (from evil). And Allah hath power over all things. Qur'an ۵:۲۱

Christianity is divided into about twenty thousand sects, all of which maintain that their teachings are based on the Book. Most of them have many things in common, and many differ from others in their emphasis of some particular, often seemingly insignificant, point of doctrine or practice. This is due to many things, not least of which is the fact that so much of Christianity is based on heathen sources rather than .the Book

But this passage in the Qur'an points out two relevant things about Christian use of the Bible. The first of these is that the prophet Muhammad (a.s.) has come to reveal many things that Christians have tended to overlook in the Bible message. The second of these is that the prophet Muhammad (a.s.) has come to point out that some of the matters in the Bible to which certain sects are attached are local or temporary measures relevant to the application of the true faith to a particular time and place. .They are therefore not to be taken and practiced today

Everyone who uses the Bible agrees on these two things in principle. Everyone agrees that the Bible contains the basics of faith, and everyone agrees that it contains practices that are not to be applied today. What they disagree

on is what these principles and practices are. Muhammad (a.s.) provides an authoritative, prophetic solution to this dilemma. Islam, not an ecumenical movement or interfaith dialogue, is the answer to Christian sectarianism.

When practicing Christians point to the Bible in defense of heresy, the proper answer is that Christians disagree in their interpretation and understanding of the Bible on that point, therefore the Qur'an was given to clarify matters. When secular Christians point out that Biblical faith cannot be determined, because Christians themselves disagree on the interpretation of the Bible, this is an opportunity for the Muslim to point out that the Qur'an clarifies the issues of disagreement.

۲.۸ Use Islamophobia to Good Advantage.

Say: "O People of the Book! Do you disapprove of us for no other reason than that we believe in Allah, and the revelation that hath come to us and that which came before (us), and (perhaps) that most of you are rebellious and disobedient?" Qur'an ۵:۶۲

One of the most important issues in the meeting between Islam and the people of the Book is Islamophobia, or the accusations of non-Muslims that Islam is backward, fostering ignorance, injustice, economic chaos, oppression of women and other evils. Generally Muslims try to meet such accusations in one or both of two ways. The first is defensiveness. They try to give evidence that the accusations are untrue. The other method is programmes presenting Islam as peaceful, conciliatory, and rational.

Of course both methods rely on accurate material, but they have two weaknesses. One is that they are

selective, and this undermines their effectiveness. The second is that they accept the parameters of the accusers. Finally, these ways of working are distracting, taking the .attention away from the real basic issues

The Qur’an provides another way. That way is to counter accusation with accusation. It is to note the hypocrisy of the accusation. Of course that hypocrisy is evident in the fact that the Christian world is largely responsible for much of the violence and injustice that takes place and has taken place in recent centuries. Without claiming that Islamic societies are perfect, one can take note that neither Christian societies nor the secular societies based on them have ever maintained anything approaching .justice

Yet this is not the Qur’anic answer to accusation either. The real reason for Islamophobia lies in four factors. The first is that Muslims believe in one God. The second is that they believe in the Qur’an. The third is that they believe in the former revelation, a fact that remains a threat to the people of the Book. The fourth is that the people of the Book, in their deviation from the Book, are rebellious and disobedient. If the people of the Book were obedient to their own Scriptures, they .would have little reason to fear Islam

The best way to deal with anti-Islamic expressions is to focus on these four factors. The first two are the frightening aspects of Islam. Submission to Allah implies that .Muslims cannot be manipulated or controlled by other powers

Adherence to the Qur’an implies that Islamic law limits their loyalty to humanly devised laws that favour the oppression of the weak by the powerful. The latter two factors relate to Christian failure on these two points. They neither adhere to the legal prescriptions of their own Book, nor do they submit to God, but rather are rebellious and disobedient. The simple proof of that is the fact that insofar as is possible to discern, not a single Christian sect maintains even the literal obligations of the .Decalogue, to say nothing of the rest of the Book

These four issues have to be dealt with before Muslims are obligated to examine the accusations of Islamophobic people. Only when they recognize the Muslim’s right and obligation towards Allah and the Qur’an, and conversely the obligation of the people of the Book towards God and the Bible, is it possible to deal with any accusations fruitfully. When the matter is brought up, one can politely say that one is ready to deal .with those issues as soon as these matters are clarified

.Maintain the Consistency between the Books of Revelation ۲.۹

Say: "O People of the Book! You have no ground to stand upon unless you stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord." It is the revelation that comes to you from your Lord that increases in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy. But sorrow not over (these) people without Faith. Qur’an ۵:۷۱

And do not dispute with the people

of the Book except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): But say, "We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our Allah and your Allah is One; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)." Qur'an ۲۹:۴۶

The Qur'anic advice here is most interesting. Qur'an ۵:۷۱ makes three points. The first point is to challenge the people of the Book to stand on the consistent revelation of the Bible and the Qur'an. Whenever an argument is brought forward, merely insist that it is invalid unless the whole body of Scripture is brought to bear on it consistently. Accept no arguments that are not based on the Qur'an as well as the Bible. This will force the people of the Book to take the Qur'an into consideration, or break off dialogue. Their desire to lead people away from Islam will generally force them to .continue

The second point is that their investigation of the Qur'an in this context will generally increase their obstinate rebellion against God and their blasphemy. One must expect this to be the result in most cases. The third point is that we should not let this state of .affairs cause us sorrow or mental stress. We should merely accept it as reality

The passage in Qur'an ۲۹:۴۶ reiterates the usefulness of emphasizing the consistency between the Bible and the Qur'an. We should not let Christians convince

us that they have a different God than we, nor a different revelation. That would only grant them some grounds of validity. All difference is based on distortion, and it is unacceptable. Rather, one must emphasize that the God of the Christians is the same as the God of all humankind, who is one and unique, the Creator and therefore the sovereign of all. Adherence to the false doctrine of the Trinity does not relieve them of .their responsibility to their Creator. We are all under one God

.Engage in Jihad ۲.۱۰

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued. Qur'an ۹:۲۹

What is the valid way of fighting in any given situation is open to discussion. Nevertheless, all should understand clearly that the goal of Islam is to oppose injustice throughout the world and establish a society in which the highest possible level of justice for all people can be maintained. It is the teaching of Islam that the implementation of Islamic law is the only way to achieve that. Therefore, the goal of .Muslims must be the establishment of a society in which Islamic law is recognized

There are three internal impediments to this. The first is ignorant and violent reactionary movements caused by colonialism and post-colonial policy. This type

of supposed Islam fans the flames of fear, hatred, and opposition. It forms the other side of the vice that anti-Islamic powers use to oppress the peoples of the world. The second internal impediment is modernism. This is the attempt to adapt Islam to the colonial situation. At the present time it affects many Muslims, but has begun to appear passé. The third impediment is the adaptation of Muslims to the requirements of globalization. The type of government, economy, society, and culture that is becoming increasingly common to the whole world contains some aspects that are in conflict with Islamic principles. One of the most glaring of these is interest-based economy. Another can be called exploitative democracy, a system ostensibly for the whole population, but in reality the rule of the most powerful lobbies.

Islamic jihad must overcome both internal and external impediments, and when it fails to do so, it eventually merely supports the continuance of anti-Islamic tendencies. The goal of jihad must be the implementation of Islamic law in such a way that there is real justice for all people, not just for people who somehow tie into a lobby. Jihad is the struggle firstly to establish a purely Islamic state, that is, a society in which Islamic law is fully implemented in public policy, social policy, and economy. Secondly jihad is to extend that state globally. The point is not to foster the rule of Muslims over non-Muslims, but to foster justice for all.

It is not the goal

of Islamic jihad to create a pluralistic society in which all ways of life are considered equally valid. Such a philosophy is in practice merely a cover for exploitation. The concept of freedom has become in practice a vehicle for freedom to exploit. Those who do not accept justice as expressed in Islamic law, which is essentially the same as Biblical law, must eventually submit to a situation in which their exploitative activities are limited. The system of jizya was instituted for that purpose. Muslims must work respectfully, peacefully, single-mindedly and effectively towards that goal, .but never going beyond the behaviour sanctioned by the Imamate

.Maintain the Grace of Allah Instead of Sacrificial Atonement for Sin ۲.۱۱

That the People of the Book may know that they have no power whatever over the Grace of Allah, that (His) Grace is (entirely) in His hand, to bestow it on whomsoever He Wills. For Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding. Qur'an ۵۷:۲۹

There is a misconception among Christians about the grace of God. In its traditional form, grace in Christianity is seen through two vehicles: the sacrifice of Jesus (a.s.) on the cross and the dispensing of grace through the Church. Some evangelical forms of Christianity have largely dispensed with the latter, because of the post-medieval .influence of Islam on Europe and Christianity

Whatever the depths of meaning there may be in this Qur'anic passage, it does deny the Christian monopole on divine grace. Evangelical Christians will emphasize that God forgives by grace alone to those who believe in the sacrifice of Christ. The

Islamic answer to that is that Muslims believe in forgiveness by divine grace alone. No sacrifice, human or otherwise, can add to the infinite grace of God. To maintain such a doctrine is to imply that divine grace is insufficient, a thought that is completely .unacceptable

This factor is presented last in the Qur'an. It is the factor among all Christian heresies that is least often questioned by Christians. The question of ecclesiastical authority is the major reason behind sectarian splitting, although some detail of practice is often taken as an excuse. The doctrine of the Trinity is completely rejected by some sects, and highly questioned by others. But the doctrine of the atonement finds strong support. This strong adherence to a basically heathen idea, the myth of the dying and resurrecting god, is inexplicable except with the understanding that Christianity is .basically a heathen faith

The Qur'anic answer to this problem is to proclaim that Allah has the right to forgive. The Christian doctrine is based on the presupposition that God is powerless to forgive without an atoning death. The most direct way of combating this is to note the sovereignty of God and His intrinsic right to forgive. As human beings we do not have .the right to question the divine right of forgiveness

The disarming Christian argument is that justice demands a sacrifice. As reasonable as this may appear to Christians, the argument is false. The demands of justice, no matter how reasonable they may seem to the human mind

.or emotions, do not override the divine prerogative

It is a matter of survival. We do not live in a world where all religious traditions are equally valid, all of which foster love and tolerance of one another. Such rubbish is a camouflage for exploitation. We live in a world where ideas support policies, and policies affect lives and livelihoods. The idea the one can make wrongs right by crucifying an innocent man in the Middle East leads to the committing of atrocities. It contributes to the death of thousands. The Christian doctrine of atonement, no matter how it is covered with emotional appeal, hides within its core the very human desire for revenge. It is no use to call this the demands of justice. It is raw revenge, and .nothing more. Its heathen, pagan character does not change

This is why Christians have to be told outright that they have no power over the grace of God. They live in a world of illusion, created by a false, heathen faith. The Christian belief in their monopole on grace will not end with the death of so many thousands of Muslims in the Middle East. It will eventually result in calling down upon themselves and the secular society they have created the response of God Himself. Then all will .know that God has grace for whomsoever He will

Evidencing Islam with the Bible

This book is a guide to presenting Islam to people from a background in which the .Bible has had a particular religious role

Little has been said about people from other traditions, although much is also applicable throughout the world. There are points of commonality between Islam and the other classical written traditions, and these can be used to advantage. There are practices in common as well as much evidence in favor of Islam in the classical texts of the many religions of the world. This final chapter examines some of the ways the Bible can be used by the Muslim engaged in da'wa, the invitation to Islam among .those whose background is in a traditionally Christian country

The Bible contains what Muslims refer to as the Tawrat, Zabur, and Injil, and is the holy book of Christianity. It is comprised of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament is made up of four gospels, the book of Acts, some letters, and the book of Revelation. Other early writings, both letters and gospels, exist, but were not included in the New Testament by the Church fathers who decided what should be accepted and what not. The Old Testament is made up of the Jewish canon: the books of Moses (as), the prophets and the writings. There is some disagreement about the inclusion of another group of writings called the Apocrypha. This whole collection may have been written over a period as great as ۱۶۰۰ years. It .contains at least ۶۸ distinct books, but altogether is called the Bible

There are several similarities and contrasts between the Bible and the Qur'an. Both

are books of divine revelation, both contain the true faith, and both are easily accessible. For the most part, they are also consistent with one another. However, the Bible is different in several ways. First of all, it is a collection from many writers, so that it cannot be evaluated as to its validity and genuineness as a whole. Each part has to be judged for itself. The habit of publishing these writings in one volume clouds the issue. It is as though the Qur'an, a collection of both weak and strong ahadith, and .the Arabian Nights were published all in one volume

That would not detract from the validity of the Qur'an, but it would present some problems. Those problems are the ones we meet in the Bible. Secondly, the Bible is uneven in transmission. Some of it is undoubtedly transmitted nearly perfectly, while other parts are clearly defective. Finally, the Bible as we have it in the best sources is written in Hebrew with some Aramaic portions, and Greek. The Qur'an is consistently .written in Arabic. All of these matters have to be taken into account in using the Bible

There are two traditional ways by which Muslims use the Bible. The first is to point to textual criticism, the research done by Christian and liberal Jewish scholars showing the Bible to be defective. The conclusion is that the Bible is unreliable, and therefore Christianity is unreliable. This approach is sometimes effective in drawing some ,people to Islam. However

it has two weaknesses. Textual criticism itself as a method is questionable, and to appeal to it in the case of the Bible is to invite a similar approach on the part of Christians in reference to the holy Qur'an. The result is often name-calling rather than .progress in finding truth

The second traditional way by which Muslims make use of the Bible is to select passages that seem to support Islam, specifically in the matter of the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad (as). It appears that a great deal could be done in this area that has not yet been done. Somewhat inconsistently, some people use both .approaches at the same time

Considering the unevenness of the Bible, Christians can and do draw from it support for their own positions. Most such support is based on clearly biased translations, and these are almost never published in parallel with the original. Every text that can be construed ambiguously is turned in translation towards the support of the Trinity, the atoning death of Jesus (as), and the authority of the Church. This makes it difficult for the Muslim to gain the expertise necessary to meet Christian arguments. Such texts .have to be painstakingly evaluated in the original

The facile answer that Muslims can give is that what appears to disagree with Islam is clearly a corruption of the text. For the most part, this will be true. In dialogue with non-Muslims, the Muslim must protect him or herself by maintaining

that the Biblical text contains the truth, but is not itself the truth. However, as more and more research is done, we find that more and more of the Bible in fact supports .Islam, and less and less is actually dubious

Some Biblical sources for Islamic beliefs and practices have already been given in Chapter One. Parts Two and Three of this book give fairly comprehensive sources for most Islamic principles, sometimes in comprehensive detail. Given that Islam in all five schools of jurisprudence is based are the holy Qur'an and hadith literature as interpreted in various ways, the wealth of detail given in this book ought to suffice for .most purposes

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the general principles of how the Bible can be used. The underlying presupposition is that Muslims, in appealing to textual criticism to undermine the Bible and consequently Christianity with it, and in appealing to a selection of texts to support the Prophet of Islam (as), are not taking advantage of the full potential. Even scholars who study the Bible generally follow a particular Islamic form of criticism. This criticism is based on the idea that the Bible is greatly corrupted and must be examined with scholarly care to re-establish the original references to Muhammad (as). Their efforts may or may not be fruitful. It is not my purpose to enter that subject. That focus, however, has led to the neglect of a plethora of texts existing in the Bible as we have

it in its present state, texts that clearly support Islam without any scholarly apparatus needed to make it apparent. Other texts become clear with a minimum of scholarly .study, mainly pointing out biases in translation of the original Hebrew and Greek

Muslims ought not to fear to use the Bible in defence of Islam. The argument of corruption only makes it easier to do so, since one can always fall back on that when confronted by Christians quoting a text that is difficult to manage. The misquoting of ambiguous Pauline texts is the whole basis of the Biblical justification of Christian doctrine. Since Paul never met Jesus (as) and was not one of the twelve apostles, one is always justified in rejecting his writings out of hand. In so doing one is immediately relieved of nearly all of the problematical material in the Christian Bible. I believe that Paul can be used effectively in the support of Islam, but for the most part that requires the depth of textual criticism and professional expertise that some Muslim .scholars are already applying to the text

It is easy to fall into confrontational debate with Christians by appealing to the Bible, especially in a proof-text manner. It is better to appeal to the Bible in an informal and relaxed circle with the Bible forming part of a liturgical introduction to the group event as described in Chapter Seven. Merely reading a series of texts that support Islam and allowing them to become the starting point

for friendly discussion is better than a confrontational situation. I have sometimes found Christian missionaries so ready to disagree, that I have got them to disagree with their own arguments just because they came from me in a situation they .considered confrontational

Of course the Bible can be used at times to rid oneself of fruitless contacts, such as visiting Jehovah's Witnesses. It can be amusing to watch them leave after reading Daniel ۶:۱۰, where prayer in prostration is presented as worth risking one's life for. If .you offer to teach them to pray, they inevitably remember another appointment

p: ۱۸۶

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

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mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

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Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

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Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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